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The
HARP OF AEOLUS
*and others Essays on Art,
Literature & Nature*

These essays, although written over a period of years, are united by a common theme, the relationship of the artist to nature. Geoffrey Grigson is both naturalist and poet. The dual approach has enriched his vision and given a fresh and original character to all his writing. Thus we find him often the champion of neglected artists of the past or the opponent of many who are popularly acclaimed today. Besides the vigour and challenge of conviction, there are to be found in these essays scholarship, fidelity to nature and a style of writing as skilled and delightful as the broadcast talks for which the author is celebrated.

The
HARP OF AEOLUS
*and other Essays on Art
Literature & Nature*

by
GEOFFREY GRIGSON

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*The Gods of the earth and sea
Sought thro' Nature to find this Tree;
But their search was all in vain:
There grows one in the Human Brain.*—WILLIAM BLAKE

A poet ought not to pick nature's pocket: let him borrow, and so borrow as to repay by the very act of borrowing. Examine nature accurately; and trust more to your imagination than to your memory.—S. T. COLERIDGE


The great mystery of existence is the relation of the human soul to nature, and on that naked mystery rest the reality of faith and the symbolism of belief.—P. E. MORE

NOTE

THESE essays are printed in the historical order, roughly, of their subjects; but they have also one subject, which is the relationship between artists and nature. Written, and rewritten, at various times in the last ten years, they have, except one, appeared severally in *The Cornhill*, *Signature*, *The Mint*, *Apropos*, *Polemic*, the *New English Review*, and the *Architectural Review*. The essay on Henry Moore was published as an introduction to his drawings in the series of Penguin Modern Painters.

I am grateful to Professor Bonamy Dobrée and Mrs. Dorothy Broughton, for telling me of William Diaper's poem *Brent*.

CONTENTS

	PAGE
I. WILLIAM  DIAPER, AN UNKNOWN POET	1
II. GEORGE STUBBS, 1724–1806	13
III. THE HARP OF AEOLUS	24
IV. THE VISION OF THE ENGLISH ROMANTICS	47
V. THE UPAS TREE	56
VI. SOME NOTES ON FRANCIS DANBY, A.R.A.	66
VII. HORSE-CHESTNUT TREES	79
VIII. THE PRERAPHAELITE MYTH	86
IX. WILLIAM BARNES, 1800–1886	98
X. THOMAS HARDY	123
XI. CONSTABLE, COURBET, AND DE CHIRICO	131
XII. THE DRAWINGS OF HENRY MOORE	140
XIII. HOW MUCH ME NOW YOUR ACROBATICS AMAZE	151

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

(at the end of the book)

- | | |
|-----------------------|---|
| 1 George Stubbs | Skeleton of a Fowl |
| 2 George Stubbs | Detail from "The Phaeton" (National Gallery) |
| 3 Artist Unknown | A Plurality of Worlds |
| 4 Alexander Cozens | On the Rhone (T. Girtin Collection) |
| 5 J. R. Cozens | Valley with Winding Streams (Victoria and Albert Museum) |
| 6 Samuel Palmer | Pastoral with a Horse-chestnut (Ashmolean) |
| 7 H. A. Bowler | The Doubt: Can These Bones Live? (Tate Gallery) |
| 8 Francis Danby | Disappointed Love (Victoria and Albert Museum) |
| 9 Francis Danby | The Opening of the Sixth Seal (National Gallery, Dublin) |
| 10 Francis Danby | Scene from "A Midsummer Night's Dream" (Oldham Art Gallery) |
| 11 Francis Danby | Watercolour (A. P. Oppé Collection) |
| 12 Arthur Hughes | The Tryst (Tate Gallery) |
| 13 Augustus Egg | Outward Bound (Ashmolean) |
| 14 Ford Madox Brown | Walton on the Naze (Birmingham Art Gallery) |
| 15 John Constable | Hadleigh Castle (National Gallery) |
| 16 Mary Cassat | Femme Assise, Vue de Dos et Enfant (Louvre) |
| 17 Gustave Courbet | In the Forest (Tate Gallery) |
| 18 Giorgio de Chirico | Ritorno del Figliol Prodigo |
| 19 Henry Moore | Four Grey Sleepers |
| 20 Henry Moore | Three Women and a Child |

I

WILLIAM DIAPER: AN UNKNOWN POET

“**I** HAVE contrived to make a parson of him, for he is half one already, being in deacon’s orders, and serves a small cure in the country; but has a sword at his arse here in town. ’Tis a poor, little, short wretch, but will do best in a gown, and we will make Lord Keeper give him a living . . .” Swift, in fact, writing to Stella, is the clue to this poet, of whom memory has faded away, and who has no place even among the perjurers, panders, murderers, forgers, clergymen, schoolmasters, pedants, creepers and crawlers of the *Dictionary of National Biography*.

I came across him in four lines and a half, by themselves, without comment, in a book by an American; and then tracked him—the tracking was easy enough—into the *Journal to Stella*:

But the vast unseen Mansions of the Deep
Where secret Groves with liquid Amber weep,
Where blushing Sprigs of Knotty Coral spread
And gild the Azure with a brighter red,
Were still untouch’d . . .

Good enough: plenty of amber weeps and plenty of coral branches just on this side of 1700, and for years after that. But it is pleasant, like any other quest, whether for a rare plant or a piece of Bristol pottery, to go hunting after a new poet in the back forest of bibliography and literature. A luxury as well, since plenty of named and enormous mountains stick out of the forest, and need, in a short life, to be climbed. One must allow oneself some luxuries; and I have concluded, under the cliffs of Balzac and Dante and Shakespeare and somewhere between the legs of Alexander Pope, that William Diaper was well worth finding. There was more to him than pilferings from Dryden, and coral and amber; the poor, little, short wretch, preferring a sword to a gown, had a face looking over the hill-top into that luxuriant, overpowering valley of literature that leads towards ourselves.

The four lines and a half came from *Nereides, or Sea Eclogues*, published in 1712, and dedicated to William Congreve, then an established elegant arbiter of forty-two, well provided for, and with his plays famous and far behind him. The lines came in fact from the dedicatory verses. When he published *Nereides*, William Diaper was

twenty-seven. He had gone up to Oxford as "pauper puer", the son of a poor man from Bridgwater, in Somerset; he took his B.A. from Balliol, he was curate of Brent, also in Somerset (about which he wrote a dank, bitter and amusing poem), and by 1717 he was dead. Swift knew him when *Nereides* came out. He told Stella:

Here is a young fellow has writ some Sea Eclogues, Poems of Mermen, resembling pastorals of Shepherds, and they are very pretty, and the thought is new. Mermen are he-mermaids; Tritons, natives of the sea. Do you understand me? I think to recommend him to our Society to-morrow. His name is Diaper. Pox on him, I must do something for him, and get him out of the way. I hate to have any new wits rise, but when they do rise I would encourage them; but they tread on our heels and thrust us off the stage.

Diaper lived to thrust no one off, lived only for that short space by which writers, making no splash, can thrust none but themselves into the dark.

He owes much to Swift, who has left the only clues to his person, and who brought him indeed among his friends: "The author of the Sea Eclogues sent books to the Society yesterday, and we gave him guineas a-piece; and, may be, will do further from him (for him, I mean)." Swift was pushing Parnell forward at the same time. He gave Lord Bolingbroke a poem of Parnell's: "I made Parnell insert some compliments in it to his lordship." Parnell made his splash; he is a name at least, even now, around which a little criticism has gathered; but in Parnell, whose poems clung so long to their place in the anthologies and the collections, there is one sparkle of fire for scores in Diaper. "This morning I presented one Diaper, a poet, to Lord Bolingbroke, with a new poem, which is a very good one; and I am to give him a sum of money from my lord." The poem—it was still in manuscript—was *Dryades*; or, *The Nymphs Prophecy*, printed very soon after, in 1713, by Lintott, who in the same year, and the same font and format, printed Pope's *Windsor Forest*. Diaper was twenty-eight, Pope twenty-five. Pope had published the *Essay on Criticism*, *The Rape of the Lock*, and a good deal else. Diaper was nobody, and a nobody's son, had no capital but his wits—a poor, little, short wretch who did not commend himself to Pope. But *Dryades*, no less than *Windsor Forest*, was a poem, and "a very good one". There was no error in Swift's judgement, as we shall see. If Swift could detect in Diaper, at first view, a rising wit capable of treading upon the heels of his elders and thrusting them from the stage, Pope perhaps could see a poet who might dilute his own com-

ing supremacy. Maybe, as well, Diaper had teeth, was envious of this younger, better placed poet, and had feared Pope's entry into Swift's friendship; had offended Pope, and more than Pope, by his character. Why else should we know so little about him? Why else should Pope, ten years after Diaper's death, have fitted him out with a couplet in *The Dunciad*:

Far worse, unhappy D——r succeeds,
He search'd for Coral, but he gather'd weeds. . . .

--two lines which he cancelled—cancelled, Professor Sutherland has suggested, because Swift intervened in faithfulness to his own patronage of Diaper (and in faithfulness, one might add, to his own estimate of Diaper's talent)?

Diaper's next appearance was a verse letter to Swift, *An Imitation of the Seventeenth Epistle of the First Book of Horace, Address'd to Dr. S——ft*. He sent it to Swift, in manuscript, and Swift replied, and liked it, and promised to speak once more for his preferment in the gown—"I will move heaven and earth that something may be done for you." What he did not approve so much was Diaper's leaning towards translation. Pope was busy on the *Iliad*, Diaper beginning (and wasting his time, as Swift must have thought) a translation of Oppian on fishes; it was the last surviving thing he wrote, though the two books he finished appeared only after he was dead.¹ And about his death, four years later—Diaper was ill, seriously ill, before the verse letter was written, and before it was published: "I was to see a poor poet, one Mr. Diaper," Stella was told early in 1713, "in a nasty garret, very sick. I gave him twenty guineas from Lord Bolingbroke." Swift and Parnell had walked about the same time to see Swift's other protégé, William Harrison, bringing him not twenty guineas, but a hundred pounds. He too was ill. Swift was afraid to knock: "I knocked, and his man in tears told me his master was dead an hour before." William Harrison had contrived to write some two or three poems several years earlier. He was not "a poor, little, short wretch", but "a little pretty fellow, with a great deal of wit, good sense, and good nature". Peering, in fact, into Swift's silences and omissions and comments on Diaper, recalling Pope's contempt ten years after the earth was round him, one may surmise that there was something about the wretch—swagger, bounce, obsequiousness, spinelessness, perhaps a smartness and snottiness of character—which damned him, kept him from preferment and from the advertised company of the

¹ *Brent* was also printed after his death, in Curll's *Miscellanea* 1726. A manuscript of it in Diaper's hand is in the Bodleian.

elect, in spite of Swift's recognition of his talent; kept him from such friendship as Dryden gave to John Oldham, and major has so often conferred, to the confusion of critics, upon the less deserving minor; something which, at last, cut him off from even the scraggy, posthumous laurels of a contribution to *Modern Language Notes* or the *Review of English Studies*. *Dryades* was once, at any rate, reprinted. Joseph Warton remembered both *Dryades* and the Oppian and hoped to see them anthologized. Beljame kicked Diaper's forgotten corpse in 1881, and in 1943 Professor Sutherland called him "an inoffensive young poetaster". Only Swift declared him to be a wit, and an able writer; and no one has bothered to see if Swift was right.

II

As he was indeed; and for a good many reasons. Not simply (the reason that might have been given twenty years ago for celebrating a discovery of Diaper) because he foreruns a later concern for the details and the mood of nature—

Be still, ye Aspin boughs, nor restless scare
With busy trembling Leaves, the list'ning Hare,

for such "anticipations"—or beginnings—are everywhere around 1700; but in the main because Diaper wrote with a purity of English, with an uncommon neatness and sharpness of form, and delicacy of ear. He was level, in most ways, with his time, and not behind it, not derivative. He could see, he could hear, he could shape; and second to few of his coevals, he partook in the best sense of the prettiness of his age, the prettiness of Pope's statement that "there is certainly something in the amiable simplicity of unadorned Nature, that spreads over the mind a more noble sort of tranquillity, and a loftier sensation of pleasure, than can be raised from the nicer scenes of art", the prettiness of Pope remarking "That Idea of the Picturesque, from the swan just gilded with the sun amidst the shade of a tree over the water."

Here are two pieces which show that not inconsiderable virtue:

But now the Huntsman takes his usual Round,
While list'ning Foxes hear th' unwelcome Sound;
And early Peasants, who prevent the Day,
May hither chance unweening guide their Way;
For see—the greyish Edge of Dawn appears,
Night her Departure mourns in dewy Tears.
The Goblins vanish, and the Elfin Queen
Foregoes the Pleasures of the trampled Green.

WILLIAM DIAPER: AN UNKNOWN POET

Nature's unwilling to be rouz'd so soon,
 And Earth looks pale on the declining Moon;
 The nimble Hours dress out th' impatient Sun,
 While rising Fogs, and whisp'ring Gales fore-run.
 The Bats (a doubtful kind) begin their Sleep,
 And to their Cells the darken'd Glowe Worms creep;
 The coming Day the conscious Insects grieve,
 And with slow Haste the grateful Herbage leave,
 Wreath o'er the Grass, and the moist Path pursue,
 Streaking with viscous Slime the shining Dew;
 In some close Shade a friendly Covert find,
 And Parent Earth receives the reptile Kind.
 Guilt, and the Day disturb the wily Snakes,
 And Urchins hide their Theft in thorny Brakes.
 All fly the Sun, and seek a cool Retreat,
 Nor envy buzzing Swarms, who joy in scorching Heat . . .
 When they (*they is the shoal of slime-fish*) in Throngs a
 safe Retirement seek,
 Where pointed Rocks the rising Surges break,
 Or where calm Waters in their Bason sleep,
 While chalky Cliffs o'erlook the shaded Deep,
 The Seas all gilded o'er the Shoal betray
 And shining Tracks inform their wand'ring Way.
 As when soft Snows, brought down by Western Gales,
 Silent descend and spread on all the Vales;
 Add to the Plains, and on the Mountains shine,
 While in chang'd Fields the starving Cattle pine;
 Nature bears all one Face, looks coldly bright,
 And mourns her lost Variety in white,
 Unlike themselves the Objects glare around,
 And with false Rays the dazzled Sight confound:
 So where the Shoal appears, the changing Streams
 Lose their Sky-blew, and shine with Silver Gleams.

The first is from the "very good" poem of Swift's praise—*Dryades*; the second is translation—very close translation—from Oppian's *Halieutica*. Neither, to my ear, is the work of a "young poetaster", but of a poet with skill and nicety; and in each piece there are lines, not competent, not description, but of that *mens divini*or, that dignity of genius which Dr. Johnson denied to Diaper's contemporary, John Gay—the line—

And Earth looks pale on the declining Moon . . .

And—

Nature bears all one Face, looks coldly bright
And mourns her lost Variety in White . . .

in which the pause enforced by the meeting of the two open syllables—*Variety in White*—is half the making of the line, in sound, and in vision of a snow-gleaming world. There is not so much writing of that order, that imaginative order, at any time, and in Diaper's time especially. Even in the gold and silver wire of Pope, in his nicer lines of art, there is a want of felt life, of interpreted nature which makes for a frigid prettiness (which it does often avoid). Gay's shortcoming illuminates Diaper's occasional fullness. Copious, skilful, able at times to write a song of a natural and controlled delightfulness, Gay in his long poems often reflects nature with a tedious impersonal accuracy; simply transcribes:

Her solid globe beats back the sunny rays
And to the whole world her borrow'd light repays . . .

That is moon enough for Gay; a moon of empty matter of fact such as Diaper could never have committed. Gay is best when he is lightest and briefest or when he takes on, as far as his nature permitted him, some of the coarseness and hardness of satire—a hardness which may have been outside Diaper's grasp altogether.

He search'd for Coral, but he gather'd Weeds—

What Pope meant, or felt, perhaps, is a want of that moral toughness and gravity which drove him and Swift and Defoe, and even Edward Young, the Polonius of the time, into deeper fjords of poetry:

Could I not, thro' all his Ermin,
Spy the strutting chatt'ring Vermin?

FRIEND: You're strangely proud.

POPE: So proud I am no Slave,

So impudent, I own myself no Knave:

So odd, my Country's Ruin makes me grave . . .

"No writing is good that does not tend to better mankind some way or other," said Pope, and that involved driving in some moral. At least in that sense, so far as he lived to write, and on the evidence of what he did manage to write, Diaper may not have been level with his time. Diaper's practice might more nearly be justified by that excellent critic John Dennis, on the grounds that "Poetry therefore is

Poetry, because 'tis more passionate and sensual than Prose", still more (going back) by Dryden's "I am satisfied if it cause delight." His prettiness, his wit, are kept from being mere needlework, or frost flowers on a window-pane, because he committed so few untruths to nature; as his two books from Oppian exemplify, because nothing would have been easier in 1713 than to translate Oppian on the habits and copulative peculiarities of fish into a cold, smart, fanciful unreality. Diaper is smart; but he remembers himself, he steers between exaggeration, between a witty pleasantry of style and that obedience to nature which had produced "And mourns her lost Variety in White."

"As he had a Wit that was capable of shining on any Subject," said Diaper's friend who edited and completed his version of the *Halieutica*, "so his Translation shows him to have had a peculiar Genius for Natural History. Where the Images are brighter than ordinary, he has somewhat paraphrased the Author, but nowhere, I believe, deviated from his Sense and Intention. The Richness of his Fancy and copious Expression maintain the Character and Spirit of *Oppian*, even while he recedes from the Letter of the Original."

The "peculiar Genius for Natural History", in the stricter and the wider sense, goes through all Diaper's verse, in the bits I have quoted, in *Brent* and also in his verse letter to Swift:

A Wretch made for a Country Life
True to his Pulpit and his Wife,
Who all his Pride and Grandeur shews
In Funeral Scarff and Hatband-Rose;
Could not his Dress or Manners fashion
To suit with any higher Station . . .

The Country Parson turn'd in Years,
Is neither plagu'd with Hopes or Fears,
But undisturb'd in Study pent,
Or is or would be thought content;
In sullen Contemplation sits,
Pities the Bishops, rails at Wits.

None (says old *Crape*) would cringe and fawn
For silver Verge or Sleeves of Lawn;
Or lordly Pow'r ambitious seek,
Could they their Fast, as we do break,
And dine on Pie, as Parsons must,
Made of Tithe-Apples and plain Crust

THE HARP OF AEOLUS

And Diaper's peculiar genius, his variety of movement within the strictness of form, his brightness of image, and liveliness, and weaving of a complex pattern of sound lights up passage after passage of the Oppian. Here are five pieces, without more comment, except to notice in the last a borrowing of snakes from Pope in *Windsor Forest* (though conceivably it might have been the other way round):

1

Strange the Formation of the *Eely* Race
That knows no Sex, yet loves the close Embrace.
Their folded Lengths they round each other twine,
Twist am'rous Knots, and slimy Bodies joyn;
Till the close Strife brings off a frothy Juice,
The Seed that must the wriggling Kind produce.
Regardless they their future offspring leave,
But porous Sands the spumy Drops receive.
That genial Bed impregnates all the Heap,
And little *Eelets* soon begin to creep.

2

Eagles, Sea-Dogs, and all the *Gristly* Race
Bring forth their like, no shapeless clotted Mass;
Retain the Seed within till perfect grown,
And Nature has her just Proportions shown.
From the full Womb Amphibious Paddlers creep
And little *Sea-Calves* bustle on the Deep.

3

Justly might Female *Tortoises* complain,
To whom Enjoyment is the greatest Pain.
They dread the Tryal, and foreboding hate
The growing Passion of the cruel Mate.
He amorous pursues, They conscious fly
Joyless caresses, and resolv'd deny.
Some partial Heaven has thus restrain'd the Bliss.
The Males they welcome with a closer Kiss,
Bite angry, and reluctant Hate declare.
The *Tortoise-Courtship* is a State of War.
Eager they fight, but with unlike Design,
Males to obtain, and Females to decline.

4

The flouncing Horse here restiff drives his way,
And Soles on Sands their softer Bellies lay.

The *Lamprey*, glowing with uncommon Fires,
 The Earth-bred Serpents purpled Curls admires.
 He no less kind makes amorous Returns,
 With equal Love the grateful Serpent burns.
 Fixt on the Joy he bounding shoots along,
 Erects his azure Crest, and darts his forky Tongue.
 Now his red Eye-balls glow with doubled Fires;
 Proudly he mounts upon his folded Spires,
 Displays his glossy Coat, and speckled Side,
 And meets in all his Charms the wat'ry Bride.
 But least he cautless might his Consort harm,
 The gentle Lover will himself disarm,
 Spit out the venom'd mass, and careful hide
 In cranny'd Rocks, far from the washing Tide;
 There leaves the Furies of his noxious Teeth,
 And putrid Bags, the pois'nous Fund of Death.
 His Mate he calls with softly hissing Sounds;
 She joyful hears, and from the Ocean bounds.
 Swift as the bearded Arrow's Hast she flies,
 To her own Love, and meet the Serpent's Joys.
 At her approach, no more the Lover bears
 Odious Delay, nor sounding Waters fears.
 Onward he moves on shining Volumes roll'd,
 The Foam all burning seems with wavy Gold.
 At length with equal Hast the Lovers meet,
 And strange Enjoyments slake their mutual Heat.
 She with wide-gaping Mouth the Spouse invites,
 Sucks in his Head, and feels unknown Delights.
 When full Fruition has asswag'd Desire,
 Well-pleas'd the Bride will to her Home retire.
 Tir'd with the Strife the Serpent hies to Land,
 And leaves his Prints on all the furrow'd Sand.

Here, too, are fourteen lines from *Brent*:

Had mournfull Ovid been to Brent condemn'd,
 His Tristibus He would more movingly hath pen'd.
 Gladly He would have chang'd this miry slough
 For colder Pontus, and the Scythian snow.
 The Getes were not so barbarous a race,
 As the grim natives of this motly place,
 Of reason void, and thought, whom instinct rules,

THE HARP OF AEOLUS

Yet will be rogues tho' nature meant 'em fools,
A strange half-humane, and ungainly brood,
Their speech uncouth, as are their manners rude;
When they would seem to speak, the mortals roar
As loud as waves contending with the shore,
Their widen'd mouths into a circle grow,
For all their vowells are but A and O.

III

I have indicated Diaper, with some inch by inch selections, not measured him for his place by describing and evaluating and classifying his poems, which is a job for some future editor, and historian. He is a poet; and not a dull poet. He can be enjoyed for himself, without that confusion caused when value and a place in the history of literature are mixed up. But he does need to be put back in the line, to enjoy a merited reputation.

Only good poets, and strikingly bad or ridiculous ones with something of the good poet's gift for line and order, can push isolated bits of verse into one's memory whether one wills to have them there or no. After I first read Diaper I found a number of his lines added to my stock, with the many retained from Dryden and Swift and Pope, and the fewer pushed in from such different writers as Oldham, and Defoe, and Young, the Countess of Winchelsea and Charles Churchill. But there is something else in Diaper and his fate which entices comment. How many other writers of as much worth as Diaper have dropped from sight and are still unknown? As I have suggested, the writers who vanish are those who enjoy little or no repute in their lives, who make, or have made for them by the accidents of fame and acquaintance, no "splash", who find little or no place in memoirs and gossip and letters. Fluctuations of esteem from age to age are another matter. Once the life-time reputation is made, a man's writings, known, recorded in bibliographies, dealt with rightly or wrongly by scholars and scholiasts, are there always to be re-examined or reshelved, to burn high or low. It may reflect badly and sadly upon our human discernment that if, *per contra*, a writer, or an artist, does assume a false valuation of himself in his life on earth, does splash energetically, does affix himself to the ruling circles of his art, and contrive to make others accept that valuation, he can (if he writes copiously) contrive to be known and to be overvalued for perhaps a century or two after his burial with honours. His personality and

conduct in life, his possession or his lack of charm can do the trick, irrespective of any powers of imagination. Diaper seems to have lacked this ability to charm his patrons. He has served the sentence that such ill-fate imposes.

Douglas Bush tells us, in his volume of the new *Oxford History of English Literature* (a book of American scholarship, not scholiasm, which has been wickedly under-esteemed and under-reviewed) that some forty years before Diaper's birth, only 600 books were published in one year; that the population of England was about five million compared with "the two hundred million people nowadays whose language is English". If Diaper's books could disappear so easily among so few, and still stay out of sight even after the development of modern scholarship, what are the chances now, in the vast, outpouring of "literature" among two hundred million users of English, with our own lessened respect and coarsened senses, of books of real worth staying hidden, perhaps for ever?

Douglas Bush reminds us as well, of the century before Diaper, that nearly all the works of prose "which we now read as 'literature' were written as contributions to religion, ethics, politics, science, travel, and other fields of enquiry and instruction". *Belles lettres* had not been invented: "few of the makers of seventeenth-century literature were merely men of letters". How much literature do we hide beneath our mere invention and restriction of the term? How much do we fail to see because we look all the time for literature to the professional men of letters? Like Diaper's poems, good novels can drop into quick forgetfulness in our vast, rat-like proliferation. Two which occur to me are Lord Kilminster's remarkable novel of good against evil, *Ferelith*, and *Moonfleet*, John Meade Falkner's story of adventure, two books which are small and do not shake the world, but yet deserve the celebrity of minor classics. *Ferelith* has been a delight to André Gide, *Moonfleet* has its small circle of devotees; but neither are in print, neither have I seen mentioned in any critical survey of English fiction of our century. And both were written by authors who had no care to make a splash, both by authors, like those of the seventeenth century, who were not "merely men of letters". No one has ever considered as "literature"—and literature they are—the travel books of the rock gardener Reginald Farrer. Many poets whose life-time celebrity was small, or ephemeral, or who were never celebrated, have come tardily, incompletely, or almost accidentally into a fame that the viability of their work entitles them to. Three, for example, are William Barnes, Gerard Hopkins, and John Clare, three men scarcely, or never affixed, to those circles which publicly

presided over literature in their day. The artists, since we have no art history and look upon it still without enthusiasm, are in a case even more obscuring. Their pictures are scattered (not buried as books which, at least, having been published, are in the catalogue of the British Museum Library awaiting some deliverer), their lives concealed, their letters unpreserved. That we know at all of Samuel Palmer's remarkable passion is due perhaps to two men, to his son, and to his friend George Richmond, who preserved a tradition in his family of Palmer's excellence. How many other artists lie hidden, between 1780 and to-day, hidden and neglected under the mountainous and not always merited reputation of other men?

The conclusion is, we must sharpen our tastes in our own lifetime, explore, be self-reliant, and be sceptical of those narrow, vocal, and powerful circles of the day who dictate to us our preferences in art and letters (who are no less exempt than reviewers, the Black Militia of the Pen, from Coleridge's remark that "praises of the unworthy are felt by ardent minds as robberies of the deserving"); and we must be thankful, whatever their imperfections, however much they seem in their activities like those scholiasts of the ancient world whom we were taught to despise in our own school days, however much we think of them as dry parasites, or at least epiphytes, dry lichens upon the tree of life, however much they are wrong, however, insensible they are to the meanings of life and the "livingness" of a book or a painting—we must be thankful for scholars, for bibliographers, for pedants. "Would the mole have discovered the fine gold?" Perhaps not, but the busy moles may at least excavate buried life—even if they may not detect for us how it speaks and breathes. And Diaper is in the *Cambridge Bibliography of English Literature*.

GEORGE STUBBS, 1724-1806

NONE has justly appreciated the reach and the character of the art of George Stubbs. It is often declared now that Stubbs is a fine artist, or a great artist; but no one has yet examined all that Stubbs produced in sixty years of drawing, engraving, and painting, and set down a critical estimation of its worth. It would be a long job; and no one has faced it because at present the work cannot be seen at all easily. There are only a few pictures by Stubbs in public galleries in London or elsewhere; and most of the paintings that we do see, or that we can see in the country houses for which they were commissioned, are bread-and-butter paintings. Some of them are thorough and masterly, and justify a high rank for Stubbs, but it is the fact that Stubbs was incidentally a horse-painter, or a "sporting-painter". Horse-painter—the description goes back to Fuseli and his own lifetime—is not the right description for him at all. He was a painter who painted horses. That is a different thing. And if his "sporting" pictures, and the prints from them, and the *Anatomy of the Horse* have kept his price up in the sale-rooms, their horsiness have kept his reputation fairly low in the books on art. He has never been made one of the classic hierarchy of English painting. Actually the greater part of his work in oil has gone underground. His drawings are well known to be rare. The Royal Academy owns a portfolio of the pencil drawings for the *Anatomy of the Horse*, among them a few which were not engraved. There are one or two drawings at Liverpool. A few others came into the market three or four years ago. But the majority have vanished. There were hundreds of them. Stubbs's paintings and drawings were sold in 1807, the year after his death, and in the first day's sale¹ there were seventy-two drawings, including landscape drawings and studies of a rhinoceros. In the second day's sale nearly nine hundred drawings were sold—"Lot 21. One Book with thirteen sketches of Foetus's, etc."; Lot 22, One Book with two hundred Landscapes, Views and Sketches"; "Lot 24, One Book with twelve Monkeys, fourteen Buffaloes, Bulls and Cows, in black lead, and two Tibet Bulls in black chalk"; "Lot 29, One Book with fifteen Sketches from Nature of Trees in black chalk"—and so on. The studies in oil include fruit pieces, landscapes, portraits, studies of green wood-peckers and a nightjar and swallow, and a painting of auriculas.

¹ The Sale Catalogue is reprinted in *George Stubbs*, by Sir Walter Gilbey.

The disappearance of most of these drawings and paintings seems due to one thing: that in 1807 there was next to no taste for Stubbs, since he was a mid-eighteenth century painter with an eighteenth century liking for order, classification, and clarity. Stubbs, remember, was born in 1724. He grew up in the North, he worked under an eighteenth-century provincial master, Hamlet Winstanley,¹ and he was a man of thirty-two, an anatomist and a painter with his mind made up, by the time that Burke published his *Enquiry into The Sublime and Beautiful*.

Ozias Humphry, R.A., a much younger man, is the only authority I know for these early years.² According to him, Stubbs helped in his father's tannery business until he was fifteen; and when he was only eight he had "bones of prepared subjects dissected and lent to him by Doctor Holt, a benevolent neighbour". He dissected horses and dogs during his Liverpool boyhood, and by the time he was twenty-two he was lecturing on anatomy to medical students at York. At York he acquired the body of a woman who had died before giving birth to a child; and with this and other material he made the dissections, drawings, and engravings which Dr. Burton, the original for Dr. Slop in *Tristram Shandy*, needed for his *Essay Towards A Complete New System of Midwifry* (1751). These plates, engraved when he was twenty-two, are the earliest work by Stubbs that I have seen. They have—or some of them at least have—his later apprehension of solidity and substance. "About the year 1754" he went to Italy (Richard Wilson was then in Rome); and according to Humphry in a statement which has often been quoted, he went to test "nature" against art:

Let us not escape notice that Stubbs's motive for going thither was to convince himself that nature was and is always superior to art, whether Greek or Roman—and having received this conviction he immediately resolved upon returning home.

But nature for Stubbs was the nature of natural facts which could be tidied into a system; something different, very different, from nature for James Ward, or Wordsworth, or Constable, half a century later, when Stubbs died. He had the scientific tastes of an experimenter

¹ There is a portrait by Winstanley in the Tate.

² The memoir of Stubbs by Joseph Mayer (1879) is not, as Mayer declares, and everyone else has declared since, based upon notes taken down from Stubbs himself by William Upcott. The Picton Library in Liverpool contains two small MS. volumes. One of these is a rough copy of a memoir of Stubbs in Ozias Humphry's handwriting. The other is a fair copy in handwriting of Upcott (who was Humphry's illegitimate son). Humphry and Stubbs had been friendly for many years; there is no evidence that Upcott and Stubbs knew each other at all.

and an observer, and science in his day was widening from physics to natural science, from a Newtonian Royal Society, to a Royal Society under the botanist Sir Joseph Banks. Stubbs might now have painted under the motto from Bacon that

Those, who determine not to conjecture and guess, but to find out and know; not to invent fables and romances of worlds, but to look into, and dissect the nature of this real world, must consult only things themselves.

And it was not so long before, in the famous lonely farm at Horkstow, he was bleeding horses by the jugular vein, steeping them till they were near putrefying, rigging them up on hooks in the kitchen and injecting their veins and blood vessels with tallow. He was eighteen months on this work of dissection and draughtsmanship, with his mistress, Mary Spencer, and presumably their two-year-old son. George Townley Stubbs, who grew up to engrave so much of his father's painting so badly. The *Anatomy* seems to have been planned as the doorstep to a career in London. Ozias Humphry says that he painted, at his mother's house in Liverpool, "his own grey mare, which was thought to have succeeded greatly, so that when Mr. Parsons, a picture dealer from London, saw it, he said that he was sure the author of that picture if he came to town would make his fortune in that line of art"; and he then decided to undertake the *Anatomy* on the suggestion "of his young surgical friends at York".

He came to London in 1758 or 1759, and kept himself comfortable by painting horses, chiefly—the delightful *Grosvenor Hunt* was painted in 1762—while he etched away in the early mornings and at night on the *Anatomy* plates. This six years of labour repaid him well. When the *Anatomy* was ready in 1766, it was ordered by artists, by scientists at home and abroad and by the country gentlemen and noblemen of England; and the country gentlemen and noblemen went on employing Stubbs for the next thirty years.

I do not think it is realized how much Stubbs achieved. Many of the plates are brilliant in design, exact, powerful, and exciting. That is admitted. But scientifically it was original—the *Anatomy* was surprisingly original—for a man who was an amateur in science. There had been no previous book on the anatomy of the horse with plates which were scientifically exact. The one book of importance was Carlo Ruini's *Dell' Anatomia et dell' Informita del Cavallo* of 1598. It is a book of masterly engravings, but the horse—for the most part a *dead* horse—has always a stylized, heroic attitude which would have

repelled Stubbs or any artist or anatomist of his time. In the *Anatomy of An Horse*, by Edward Snape (1683), and in De Saunier's *Perfect Knowledge of Horses*, of which there was an English edition in 1743, the figures are lifted from Ruini, and vulgarized. Stubbs started really with nothing; and finally planned that his actual book should take the form, very sensibly, of the sumptuous *Tabulae Sceleti et Musculorum Corporis Humani* (1747) of Albinus, in which the plates of skeletons, or partly dissected men, walking about in landscapes in expository attitudes, had been finished in ten years by the Dutch artist Jan Wandelaar. As in Wandelaar's book, separate keys go with each plate in the *Anatomy of the Horse*. The figures are not spotted with letters, which would spoil their effect and their accuracy. But Stubbs discarded the rhetorical scenery in which Wandelaar's figures moved or posed; and he presents always a living horse, in stages of anatomical undress, without frippery or adjunct.

There is no doubt at all of Stubbs's success with the eighteenth-century scientists. The *Anatomy* is "splendidum opus" in von Haller's *Bibliotheca Anatomica* eleven years later. It gave Stubbs the friendship and patronage of the greatest natural scientist of the time, John Hunter, and also, it seems, of the young and wealthy Joseph Banks. When Banks came back from his Australian voyage with Captain Cook five years later, with the first "kongouros", or kangaroos, one of them was painted by Stubbs.¹ The *Anatomy* brought him letters from one of the leading European scientists and anatomists, Peter Camper, and praise, towards the end of the century, from another great European, Blumenbach. Camper's judgment exemplifies the expert view. "The representations of Carlo Ruini," he says, "are useful to convey a general idea of the anatomy of the parts; but they cannot serve the painter." But Stubbs's work "is masterly and accurate; all the parts are properly placed, and in just proportions, and well delineated. In his finished pieces the muscles are represented with an accuracy that cannot be exceeded. In a word, his skeleton of the horse, and his arrangement of the muscles, exhibit such a masterpiece, that the author deserves the highest honours which were ever bestowed upon an artist."²

It is not pedantry to emphasize Stubbs's scientific as against his aesthetic triumph in the *Anatomy of the Horse*. It confirmed him in

¹ Banks owned work by Stubbs. See *Sporting Magazine*, November 1809 (quoted by Gilbey, page 230).

² *The Works of the late Professor Camper on the Connexion between The Science of Anatomy and The Arts of Drawing, Painting, Statuary, etc., etc.*, translated from the Dutch by T. Cogan, M.D., 1794. The last sentence is translator's hyperbole and licence: Camper wrote that Stubbs "deserved a statue for such a fine work".

his life and attitude, and it helped to keep him a mid-eighteenth-century artist, in a changing and somewhat fake climate of sublimity, beauty and the picturesque. It helped, in other words, to destroy his ultimate reputation, to send his pictures out of sight after his death, and to make it difficult for us now to discover exactly how good an artist he was. Stubbs kept nearer to his own scientific view than to the aesthetic changes of his life-time. That is the point.

And this temperamental and reasoned preference would have beggared him if he had not been able to combine science and aristocratic horseflesh with a good will. But not always a good will. The *Anatomy* brought him a mass of work, which he tackled with energy, finding time also to draw lions, lionesses, tigers, leopards, from the life in the Tower of London and elsewhere. But fourteen years later he was regretting that his fame was tied so certainly to animals. He complained of this when he was working for Josiah Wedgwood in 1780. Wedgwood wrote to his partner, Thomas Bentley, and hopes that the portraits he is painting "will give him a character which is entirely new to him, for nobody suspects Mr. Stubbs of painting anything but horses & lions, or dogs & tigers, & I can scarcely make anyone believe that he ever attempted a human figure.

I find Mr. S. resents much his having established this character for himself, & wishes to be considered an history, & portrait painter. How far he will succeed in bringing about the change at his time of life I do not know."¹

He did not really succeed. Getting away from one's public character is not so easy, and Stubbs never properly divorced himself from animals right up to the time of his death. He remained true to himself, with an accurate eye upon things. He allowed himself to be a little, but not very deeply, affected by the feeling and fashion which were developing in his middle years. Sublimity, for example. He attempted to be sublime now and then, in his horses terrified or clawed by lions, in his *Phaeton and The Horses of the Sun*, or in his bulls fighting in a grand, and rather genial, clinch. Sublimity, it was laid down by Burke, depended upon the effect of terror; and its means were height, depth, obscurity, darkness, solitude, silence, variety. Stubbs had no dislike of animals wounded, or trapped, or terrified. His wild beasts and his frightened animals had the right effect.

His lion and tyger fighting near a dead stag larger than life, his lion killing a horse, a tyger lying in his den large as life, appearing

¹ *Letters of Josiah Wedgwood to Thomas Bentley*. Edited by Lady Farrer. Vol. II, pp. 485, 486.

as it were disturbed and listening . . .¹ are pictures that must rouse and agitate the most inattentive.

wrote Burke's protégé, James Barry, in a letter home to Ireland in 1765 or 1766. He made natural studies of terror. His "White Horse frighten'd at the Lyon," says Ozias Humphry, "was painted from one of the King's Horses in the Mews which Mr. Payne the architect procured for him. The expression of terror was produced, repeatedly, from time to time by pushing a brush upon the ground towards him and this aided by his Anatomical skill enabled him to give the Sentiment to the Animal which the picture represents." But Sentiments are still sentiments, or typical states, and some of the varieties of passion in the features of Stubbs's animals seem to me to come straight out of Le Brun's illustrations of Passions, copies of which Stubbs possessed. And anyway the sublime framework which was suitable for sublimely agitated animals was not the framework which appealed to him. He preferred mild grass land and trees to dark, rocky and sublime landscape. "The White Horse Frightened at The Lion", or at any rate, the version of it in the Walker Art Gallery at Liverpool, does come near sublimity, not only in its figures, but in its depths, its crags and waterfall and darkness; but there is evidence in the landscape itself, and in a letter by John Hunter to Jenner,² that the figures only were by Stubbs, while their sublime theatre had been painted by Barrett. "Hardly anything can strike the mind with its greatness, which does not make some sort of approach towards infinity; which nothing can do whilst we are able to perceive its bounds, but to see an object distinctly, and to perceive its bounds is one and the same thing. A clear idea is therefore another name for a little idea" (Burke). But Stubbs in his pictures seldom made an approach to the infinite. He used a few compositions—elements and odds and ends all complete—after Gaspard Poussin, Salvator Rosa, Claude and Vernet; but he kept on seeing distinctly, if in bits.

The sublime case against Stubbs is well concentrated in the few sharp lines which were all that Fuseli gave him in his version of Pilkington's *Dictionary*. The paragraph (there is a copy of it, in Fuseli's handwriting, in the British Museum) classifies him and tucks him away severely:

That his skill in comparative anatomy never suggested to him the propriety of style in forms, if it were not eminently proved by

¹ *Works of James Barry*. Vol. I, p. 23 (1809).

² Undated: "I have a picture of Barret and Stubbs. The landscape, by Barret; a horse frightened at the first seeing of a lion, by Stubbs." John Baron's *Life of Edward Jenner*, Vol. I, p. 34.

his Phaeton with The Horses of the Sun, would be evident from all his other figures which, when humans are seldom more than the attendants of some animal, whilst the style of the animals themselves depended entirely on the individual before him; his Tiger for grandeur has never been equalled, his Lions are to those of Rubens what Jackals are to Lions: but none ever did greater Justice to the peculiar structure of that artificial animal, the Race-courser and to all the mysteries of turf-tactics, though, unfortunately for the artist, they depend more on the facsimilist's precision than the Painter's spirit.

It is intelligent criticism, and inevitable, on sublime premises. Also, his statements are true up to a point. Stubbs's lions *are* to the lions of Rubens what Jackals are to Lions. Stubbs meant them to be. The style of the animals themselves *did* depend on the individual before him. That was the point (though Fuseli exaggerated). His figures when human *are* seldom more than the attendants of some animal. But in spite of Fuseli, man had become an animal again in the eighteenth century. Linnaeus had put him back among the animals from his own self-esteem; Stubbs was a comparative anatomist, and even "comparative" was a qualification soon to disappear.

To Stubbs, an animal was just the smallest degree more than an animal and a shape. For Fuseli, it was an image. Fuseli declared of one of Rubens's horses in a lion-hunt that it was "like a beautiful virgin. The apparent distress of such a creature must touch every one who has any sensibility".¹ Fuseli felt (they are his words) for "the colossal joys of the lion".

But Fuseli's criticism, if it does not do so from his own point of view, does go straight to the problem. As distinct from knowledge, what imaginative qualities are there in Stubbs's painting? His naturalism was not absolute: it was not, of course, the facsimilist's precision: that was going too far. Stubbs followed Leonardo: "If you would become Proficient, and practice, either with Profit or Applause, Study Nature, let her be your Mistress, nor ever let anything escape you, but what is authoriz'd by her Precept, or Example."² If his curiosity was more narrow, taking an eighteenth-century form, it was, nevertheless, intense.

His friend John Hunter set about with stupendous energy to explore the structure of all living animals. In August, 1803, Ozias Humphry went round to see Stubbs, and found him, on his seventy-

¹ *Conversations of James Northcote, R.A., with James Ward.* Edited Ernest Fletcher, 1901, p. 239.

² *Leonardo's Treatise of Painting.* English translation, 1721, page 138.

ninth birthday, engraving the first plates of his last undertaking—the work he left unfinished, which was to compare the anatomy of man, the tiger, the common fowl, and the vegetable world; and before he died, in his eighty-second year, one of the last things he said was, “I had indeed hoped to have finished my *Comparative Anatomy* ere I went.” Though, like Hunter, he seems simply to have been interested in *life*, in the variety of its shapes, is there not something of the passion and superhumanity of Leonardo in this business of an old man beginning, near his death, to summarize and extend sixty years’ work of prying and seeing? It is true that knowledge of anatomy helps a mediocre artist just about as much as he would be helped by a knowledge of the stars. Reynolds used to go to sleep during anatomy lectures at the Academy, and no delving in the interior of donkeys turned Haydon into a lion of vision and draughtsmanship. Eighteenth-century art was not much improved by the enthusiasm for anatomy in which Stubbs was a pioneer. But in the work of Stubbs, at least, anatomy helped to produce some of the liveliest drawings in English art; and Stubbs’s naturalism is a positive as well as a comparative merit. The formula by Reynolds that “the whole beauty and the grandeur of the Art consists in being able to get above all singular forms, local customs, particularities and details of every kind”, led artists less passionate and patient than Stubbs to attempt the whole beauty and the grandeur by a short cut. They went straight for the end and did not trouble to discover first “what is deformed in nature, or, in other words, what is particular and uncommon”. Better the right beginnings, and no more, by way of the study of nature, than the false endings which infest and deaden so many pretentious canvases between 1760 and 1830. And Stubbs’s work does not end at this right beginning. I said that conclusions about Stubbs were impossible with so much of his painting still to be examined; but there is evidence enough for a few conjectures and a few statements. Stubbs was an artist who seems to have developed slowly and uniformly; and some of his strongest work was done round about his eightieth year—witness the power and certainty of the engravings of the skeletons of the tiger and the fowl, and of the fowl divested of feathers, in the *Comparative Anatomy*. In this slow and patient development, Stubbs made himself able to catch shape and substance with a quick, certain effortless line. I think it is sure that every detail, and every separate figure and every object in his pictures, is derived from a previous study, or studies. In fact, in his pictures the parts are true, while the whole is often less felt than put together. What has not been imagined—often enough—is the

picture as a design. The pattern from Claude, a tall mass on the right or on the left, and an open canvas on the other side, he repeats again and again. In this way his landscape is too often a scene for the play of his shapes and figures. But how brilliant and serene this play or "contrast" becomes in his best work. "Contrast" is defined in Pilkington's *Dictionary* as "an opposition or difference in the position of two or more figures (and their members and parts) contrived to make a variety in painting"; and the *Dictionary* declares that "a well-conducted contrast is one of the greatest beauties of painting". It is one of the rarest beauties, one might add, in the sentiment-ridden painting of English artists in the lifetime of Stubbs, and ever since; and Fuseli would have been more acute if he had seen it and praised it in Stubbs's pictures. In most of the known paintings by Stubbs there is a central passage of figures and forms in which the contrast—we should more vaguely say "composition"—is subtly managed in a most engrossing and satisfying way. The contrast is of shape and line and colour. Four of the best examples I know are in *The Duke of Portland and Lord Edward Bentinck at the Jumping Bar* (1767), *Colonel Pocklington and His Sisters* (Tate Gallery), *The Phaeton and Pair*, in the National Gallery, and *The Haymakers* (1794), in the Lever Art Gallery. In this last picture, the "opposition" of the scything and forking harvesters and the tools they carry, and the pattern of colour, pale blue, pale pinkish greys, pale brown, olive green, chestnut, blue flecked with white, is anything at all but prosaic. It gives one an exceptional sense of harmony, balance, lightness, and delight. That is true also of the *Colonel Pocklington*. It is nonsense to call Stubbs prosaic, when he could draw anything so lovely as the passage from the left of this picture to the hand that holds so gracefully to the horse's mouth a minute bunch of flowers. His strength of "contrast" can be isolated and examined simply in the placing of the petals and the succession of colours in that one small area of pigment. And compare the "contrast" in the springs and wheels and spokes and body of the phaeton in the National Gallery with the "contrast" in the skeletons engraved in the *Anatomy of the Horse* and the *Comparative Anatomy*. The parts are set against each other in the skeletons by the adroitness of the way in which the limbs are placed and by the viewpoint of the artist. This rhythm of shape against shape is the ennobling element in Stubbs. He cared little for sentiment or association unjustified by the substance of contrasted, rhythmical drawing. "It may be deemed extraordinary," Stubbs wrote for his Turf Gallery series of portraits of race-horses, "to submit a work of so unusual a kind to the public consideration;

where the chief merit consists in the actions, and not in the language, of the Heroes and Heroines it proposes to record, and with whom, possibly, Literature may exclaim, 'She neither desires connection nor allows utility.' " The painter's spirit which Fuseli missed in him was the illustration of sublime literature, even though Fuseli himself had declared the painter's freedom from "tradition or the stores of history or poetry". The rare painter's spirit which he had, enabled him, like Poussin, to feel himself onto the surface of pictures in rhythm. The picturesque was not for such an artist. He could have no use for roots tangling like the hair of earth in the banks of a deep lane. He could have no use for the "roughness", "sudden variation" and "irregularity" demanded by Uvedale Price, which would have prevented the distinct and sharp drawing of a curving greyhound or of a man leaning on a stick. If Stubbs's animals were each an individual, they were good specimens. He could not have sympathized with the emotive, picturesque decrepitude of the cattle painted by James Ward; any more than he could have liked the broken colour in a landscape by Constable¹ For Stubbs, the rhythm of shapes in the paint which satisfied the eighteenth-century conditions of the Beautiful. Beauty was *smooth*. Beauty had *variety in its parts*. Beauty meant the putting on of colours *clear and bright, but not very strong and glaring*. Stubbs belongs to the era of Chardin and the smooth tints of his friend Sandby, the era of the more or less "passive acceptance of impressions".

In spite of the fact that several of his pictures do not cohere simply because he attempts to stage them beyond his vision, in spite of elements from outside himself in arrangement and detail, in spite of a few unsuccessful attempts to paint in fashions of the time, in spite of his manufacture of horse portraits (which seldom become either careless or insignificant), Stubbs is an artist who always organized his own abilities with the greatest skill. His engraving in mezzo-tint, etching and stipple has a sensitivity and completeness (it fully carries out his feeling) which is not very common in the eighteenth century, in which engraving is more a process of reproduction by a facsimilist than a way of expression. Notice how in his engravings,²

¹ Compare Sir Uvedale Price's remarks (derived from Gilpin's *Forest Scenery*) on rough animals as picturesque and smooth animals as beautiful. "The sleek pampered steed, with his high arched crest, and flowing mane is frequently represented in painting, but his prevailing character whether there, or in reality, is that of beauty,"—whereas the ass was picturesque. *Essay on the Picturesque*, Part I, Chapter III. Ward's cow to Stubbs's horse is the picturesque Gothic ruin to the beautiful Greek temple.

² Well represented in the Print Room of the British Museum. His own engravings were not confined to the early embryos, and the two Anatomies.

GEORGE STUBBS, 1724-1806

as in his drawing and his paintings (e.g. *The Lion and the Tiger*, on a china stone tablet in the Walker Art Gallery at Liverpool), he can reproduce the exact quality of a leopard's coat, or the coat of a horse or a dog, or the skin of a plucked cockerel. He could fix cool sensuality and knowledge in exquisite, emotive patches of design. He could express, under control, a peculiarity of his nature in some of the stranger and more disturbing plates of his two *Anatomies*, and, no doubt, in many drawings and studies which are not to be seen. His rhythmical drawing is related to a mind wider, keener, higher, and more inquisitive than the mind of most artists during his time. His work was thorough, and his vision moves us now because it was, at least, uncontaminated, clear, and ordered.

When he died in 1806, the explorers were down already in the dark caves and galleries of the heart.

3

THE HARP OF AEOLUS

THIS is less the story of an instrument than of an image. But so much has the Harp of Aeolus, the God of the Winds, now vanished (unless one sees a prosaic, practical descendant of it in the wireless set) that perhaps I must begin by saying what it was: the Wind Harp—the harp from which the wind extracted the music of nature. My own—rather late—Aeolian Harp is a rectangular box, with a dozen strings crossing a bridge at either end, and a lid hooking over the strings and admitting the air. It fits into the window. If there is wind or draught enough, if the Harp is in a good mood, the music it gives out “with all the expressions of the *forte*, the *piano* and the *swell* . . . is more like to what we might imagine the aerial sounds of magic and enchantment to be, than to artificial music”. And by its aid and more accurately than with the investigations of any English or American scholar of romanticism, one can think oneself back into the romantic mood. Coleridge, you will remember, had an Aeolian Harp in the window at Clevedon before his marriage; and there, with the honeysuckle round the cottage, he and Sara Fricker, listened to its “long sequaceous notes”, and there he wrote the poem I must return to, which is the *locus classicus* of the harp. He still had his harp of Aeolus with him in the Lakes, to play, in the winds off Skiddaw, the less happy music of his later poem to Sara Hutchinson. Charles Lamb noticed the harp lying in his study at Greta Hall.

Who invented it? In fact, that extraordinary, learned Jesuit Athanasius Kircher, in the seventeenth century. But possibly, for all the purposes of English and European romanticism, it was born of a hint from Alexander Pope. One might say the Harp was always in the air. More than one writer who deals with it¹ speaks of the Harp in the music of Spenser’s “Ruines of Time”:

Whilst thus I looked, loe! adoune the Lee
I saw an Harpe stroong all with silver twyne
And made of golde and costlie yvorie,
Swimming, that whylome seemed to have been
The Harpe on which Dan Orpheus was seene
Wylde beast and forrests after him to lead,

¹ e.g. William Jones: *Physiological Disquisitions*, 1781, p. 338.

THE HARP OF AEOLUS

But was th' Harpe of Philyides now dead.
At length out of the River it was reard
And borne above the cloudes to be divin'd,
Whilst all the way most heavenly noyse was heard
Of the strings, stirred with the warbling wind,
That wrought both joy and sorrow in my mind . . .

But Athanasius Kircher brought it out of the air into fact, in that century whose better defined mysteries gave so much to the expansive infinity of Romanticism. Kircher studied alchemy, astrology, horoscopy, and Egyptian hieroglyphics. To consider volcanoes, he had himself lowered into the crater of Vesuvius. He invented a counting machine, the speaking tube and the magic lantern. For the Wind Harp, turn to his *MUSURGIA UNIVERSALIS SIVE ARS MAGNA CONSONI ET DISSONI*, in X Libres digesta, Roma, MDCL, in fact to Tomus II, page 352, to *Machinamentum X*:

Aliam machinam harmonicam automatam concinnare quae nullo rotarum, follium, vel cylindri phonotactici ministerio, sed solo vento et aere perpetuum quendam harmoniosum sonum excitet.

He played it in his museum (the museum still there in Rome, in the Roman College). The window which allowed air into the room was shut, the instrument was silent: he opened the window, and "lo, there arose suddenly an harmonious sound by which everyone was astonished, not knowing whence the sound came, nor what instrument it might be". He described it, and pictured it—of pine wood, five palms long, two wide, one deep, fifteen equal strings of gut, or more.

One must feel, after that, just a bit suspicious about the English tale of its re-invention, which is this: The Scottish violin player and composer James Oswald was excited by a remark Pope had discovered in the commentaries of the Byzantine critic Eustathius, when he was busy on his translation of Homer, a passage suggesting that the wind could produce a harmony on strings. He tried to make such an instrument, but it refused to work. Then, hearing that an ordinary harp had accidentally sounded in the wind on a Thames houseboat, he tried again, succeeded, and produced a harp for the window. Whether Oswald knew Pope—Pope still had three years to live when Oswald came south and settled in London—I do not know. The notes to the *Odyssey*, in which Pope quoted again and again from

Eustathius, do have something about the wind producing music among rocks, but that would hardly have been enough. Yet the Harp fits in with Pope. It would not be out of keeping that an image and a property which were soon to romp and proliferate through Romantic literature, an instrument which was soon to express the popular sentiment of a new age, should have had at any rate some connection with the master of Reason and Uniformity, who nevertheless broke the smoothness, who was master of the sparkle and the grotto and the natural garden, who fancied planting an old gothic cathedral in trees, and cutting a Welsh mountain into a statue of Alexander the Great, who declared that Newton "whose rules the rapid Comet bind" could not "Describe or fix one moment of his Mind", that "What Reason weaves, by Passion is undone".

Oswald may indeed have started experiments on the hint of Pope and Eustathius; but I have no doubt at all that he came across Kircher's description, perhaps after his own efforts had failed, because Kircher's harp is obviously the prototype. Oswald, I once thought, at least invented the name—an act about as important, for its coming career, as inventing the harp itself. Kircher had left it as *Machinamentum X*, little guessing its future. The Harp of Aeolus, the Harp of the Wind God, was a good name, giving so useful, so long, and so sequaceously romantic an adjective for poets down to Tennyson to play with, as "Aeolian". But even the name preceded Oswald, or at least the association with Aeolus. It looks very much as if Oswald, on top of Pope and Eustathius and Kircher, had read of the Harp in a once celebrated encyclopaedia, J. J. Hofmann's *Lexicon Universale Historico-Geographico-Chronologico-Poetico-Philologicum*. Hofmann, in his seventeenth-century Latin, takes over the Harp from Kircher, and calls it "Aeolium instrumentum", and says moreover it must be played in a draft of air through a window or a door. Which, I think, disposes of Oswald as its inventor; except that he saw the possibilities of the Harp, manufactured it, no doubt, and sold it in his music shop near St. Martin's Church. But, though there is something more to be said of Oswald, it is time to hear the Harp of Aeolus sounding for the first time in literature.

II

It sounds first in 1748, four years after Pope's death, in James Thomson's "pleasing land of drowsy-head", in *The Castle of Indolence*:

THE HARP OF AEOLUS

Each sound, too, here to languishment inclin'd,
Lull'd the weak bosom, and induced ease,
Aërial music in the warbling wind,
At distance rising oft by small degrees,
Nearer and nearer came, till o'er the trees
It hung, and breath'd such soul-dissolving airs,
As did, alas! with soft perdition please:
Entangled deep in its enchanting snares,
The listening heart forgot all duties and all cares.

A certain music, never known before,
Here lull'd the pensive melancholy mind;
Full easily obtain'd. Behoves no more,
But sidelong, to the gently waving wind,
To lay the well-tun'd instrument reclin'd;
From which, with airy flying fingers light,
Beyond each mortal touch the most refin'd,
The god of winds drew sounds of deep delight:
Whence, with just cause, the harp of Aeolus it hight.

Ah me! what hand can touch the string so fine?
Who up the lofty diapason roll
Such sweet, such sad, such solemn airs divine,
Then let them down again into the soul?
Now rising love they fann'd; now pleasing dole
They breath'd, in tender musings, through the heart;
And now a graver sacred strain they stole,
As when seraphic hands an hymn impart,
Wild-warbling Nature all above the reach of Art!

Thomson also wrote a dullish "Ode on Aeolus's Harp", and when it was published in 1750, two years after his death, a footnote ascribed the invention to Oswald. William Collins, in 1749, in his memorial ode on Thomson, wrote of placing Thomson's Harp in a Thames reed-bed:

In yon deep bed of whisp'ring reeds
His airy harp shall now be laid,
That he whose heart in sorrow bleeds
May love thro' life the soothing shade.

Then maids and youths shall linger here,
And while it's sounds at distance swell,
Shall sadly seem in Pity's ear
To hear the woodland pilgrim's knell.

THE HARP OF AEOLUS

Remembrance oft shall haunt the shore,
When Thames in summer wreaths is drest,
And oft suspend the dashing oar
To bid his gentle spirit rest!

Collins, too, felt it necessary to add a footnote, explaining that the airy harp was "The Harp of Aeolus, of which see a description in the *Castle of Indolence*". Quick in taking hold of it, Christopher Smart, then thirty and a Fellow of Pembroke Hall, refers to the Harp in his Latin poem on the Propagation of Yawning which he published in 1752. But after Thomson, in *Drowsy-head*, the other earliest descriptive use that I know comes, in 1753 from the coarser mind of Tobias Smollett, which (see his *Ode to Independence*) was none the less dedicated to Nature. It is in *The Adventures of Ferdinand Count Fathom*. Thomson says "A certain music, never heard before": Smollett also begins "Some years ago, a twelve-stringed instrument was contrived by a very ingenious musician, by whom it was aptly called the harp of Aeolus. . . ." Ferdinand "had brought one of these new-fashioned guitars into the country", into a house where "the effect of it was still unknown". So clearly, when Thomson and Smollett wrote, the harp was not so very far from its English beginnings. And when one puts two and two together, one suspects a Scottish conspiracy over the tale of its invention. Thomson, Smollett, Oswald—all three were Scots. Oswald composed music for poems both by Thomson and Smollett.¹ There was a close Scottish circle in London, so it seems obvious that the two writers who first wrote of the harp were acquainted with "the very ingenious musician" who first launched it. As for when, exactly, the Harp was launched, the date must be between 1741 when Oswald came to London and 1748 when Thomson published *The Castle of Indolence*; and for some years more it seems it was still a toy of the sensations of poets and musicians and the artist circles of London—and the country mansion—of young and advanced forerunners of romance such as Gray, the musically inclined William Mason, and Christopher Smart. Smart also wrote a short poem in English and in Latin, which was noticed on an Aeolian Harp in a Norfolk country house in 1754 by a correspondent to the *Gentleman's Magazine*: and then the Harp was still so unfamiliar at large that, "imagining it not to be thoroughly known", the correspondent described it in full, and the way of making it, and playing it.

Just here it will be as well to pause, to think about how, in fact,

¹ British Museum Library, Music Catalogue.

Smollett and Thomson first used the Harp. It was called The Harp of Aeolus, says Smollett, "because being properly applied to a stream of air, it produces a wild irregular variety of harmonious sounds, that seem to be the effect of enchantment, and wonderfully dispose the mind for the most romantic situations"—this most romantic situation being Fathom's seduction of the "delicate Celinda". There is nothing very profound about either use; but the harp's music is the music, the audible, harmonious, yet wild and irregular music of nature—"wild-warbling Nature all above the reach of Art"—which recalls Pope again in a piece I have already quoted: "There is certainly something in the amiable simplicity of unadorned Nature, that spreads over the mind a more noble sort of tranquillity, and a loftier sensation of pleasure, than can be raised from the nicer scenes of art." It is a pleasant convenient act of self-deception. Man, by artifice, if not art, arranges several strings on a rectangular pine-wood box, the wind moves the strings; and the man-arranged music is not man-made, but made from Nature, is Nature's music, made audible. A self-deception, but how useful an image, how delightful a toy for the next seventy years! Thomson was the New Poet, "The autumn was his favourite season for poetical composition, and the deep silence of the night the time he commonly chose for such studies." "Although he performed on no instrument, he was passionately fond of music, and would sometimes listen a full hour at his window to the nightingales in Richmond Gardens"¹—and a full hour no doubt to Nature warbling and swelling on the harp in his window frame. His *Seasons* are not a philosophic poem on man and nature with here an image, there a few lines of description, but "a mere descriptive Eulogy on the luxuriances and beauties of Nature". And a new Nature, the romantic Nature for the individual soul, "... till o'er the trees it hung, and breath'd such soul-dissolving airs"—the Nature for man, not the rational Nature for men, whose purpose had been "to make men uniform, as children of one common mother".

III

As the new nature made way, so the Harp became a universal toy in the music shops and the window casements and a repeated image in poetry and subject for poems. Lightly used images, for the most part, and bad poems; because there was an easy and a less easy pro-

¹ P. Murdoch's *Account of his Life and Writings*, in *Works*, 1762.

jection of the self into this new nature. It was (and still is, in a motor car parked above a fine view) easiness itself to become nature's drunkard. The better poet or painter uses the real world, as Goethe said of Claude Lorrain, to express the world in his own soul, by standing to nature "in a double relation", not letting go of his "well-reasoned inspiration". Claude, in his standing to Nature "is both her slave and her master; her slave, by the material means which he is obliged to employ to make himself understood; her master, because he subordinates these material means to a well-reasoned inspiration, to which he makes them serve as instruments". The story of the Aeolian Harp as an image is one of increasing slavery, increasing drunkenness, and unreasoned inspiration; with the grand exceptions of Coleridge, and Wordsworth, and perhaps Shelley and De Quincey. The simple, drunken projection is clear in Beckford at the age of twenty-three, writing thirty-four years after *The Castle of Indolence*, in a letter to the artist Alexander Cozens (whose drawings are an Aeolian Harp music in monochrome): "I am calm as a lake sheltered by hills at sunset when the winds are still." There are tipsy degrees, and different ways of acting under the influence. Beckford became a drunk of out and out magnificence. Thomson, Gray were drunks, but, still, superior drunks; and Christopher Smart was part drunk, part madly sober. As the Harp had spoken to Thomson, so it spoke to Christopher Smart of nature above artifice, of a rapturously polite intoxication. It is something (*An Inscription on an Aeolian Harp*) "which, tho' untouch'd", can

... rapturous strains impart

O rich of genuine nature, free from art.

Moreover Smart curiously discusses the Harp in *Jubilate Agno*, aware, in his madness, of its philosophical shortcomings:

For the Aeolian harp is improveable into regularity.

For when it is so improved it will be known to be the shawm.

For it would be better if the liturgy were musically performed.

For the strings of the shawm were upon a cylinder, which turned to the wind.

For this was spiritual musick altogether, as the wind is a spirit. The Harp talked of sublimities to Gray: "Did you never observe, 'while rocking winds are piping loud', that pause, as the gust is recollecting itself, and rising upon the air in a shrill and plaintive note, like the swell of an Aeolian Harp? I do assure you there is nothing in the world so like the voice of a spirit"—with which one might compare Robert Burns walking, years later, "in the sheltered

side of a wood or high plantation, in a cloudy, winter day", hearing "a stormy wind howling among the trees and raising o'er the plain", than which "scarcely any earthly object" more exalted and enraptured him. Gray's friend William Mason, musician and poet and gardener, manufactured an Aeolian Harp for himself (and also invented another implement, the Celestina, a variant of the piano). It was Mason who wrote his *English Garden*, not in couplets, but in blank verse, which was "as unfettered as Nature itself".

James Macpherson, again, could not avoid it. Committing an archaeological solecism, more to the credit of his forger's heart than his forger's head, he incautiously allowed an Aeolian Harp, not very well disguised as a harp hanging and sounding in a tree before the musician takes hold of it, into *Berrathon*, and *Temora*, and *Dar Thula*. "The blast came rustling through the hall, and gently touched my harp. The sound was mournful and low, like the song of the tomb." And in Ossian, the blast of the breeze is always making music, if not out of harps, then out of trees, out of thistles, out of grey beards. But the l.c.m. use of the Harp in the little drunkennesses of innumerable little poets and innumerable window casements, speaks in this stanza, of a forgotten, nameless writer, in which one romantic property collects two more, the fairy and the glow-worm, expressing nature's "inexpressible somewhat":

Are ye some fairy, tiny voice
That by the glow-worm's light
At lonely hours your vigil keep
Unmark'd by mortal sight?

That comes from the harp pamphlet (1808) compiled by Bloomfield, the Farmer's Boy, who made Aeolian harps to sell and keep himself alive in his London poverty—a pamphlet more valuable than his poems, and of which one thing most to be remarked is the title, *Nature's Music*. But I am skipping beyond Coleridge and Wordsworth, who bring me back to Goethe's "well-reasoned inspiration".

IV

Coleridge had had his drunkenness. He had read Giordano Bruno, had been "intoxicated with the vernal fragrance and effluvia from the flowers and first-fruits of Pantheism, unaware of its bitter root"—a statement which bears on his two great Aeolian Harp poems, the Clevedon poem, *The Eolian Harp*, written in 1795, and *Dejection*, written in the cold April of 1802, at Greta Hall, two poems with a

THE HARP OF AEOLUS

world of suffering and experience in between. The pertinent use by Wordsworth comes out of *The Excursion*. He was young:

It was a splendid evening, and my soul
Once more made trial of her strength, nor lacked
Aeolian visitations; but the harp
Was soon defrauded, and the banded host
Of harmony dispersed in struggling sounds,
And lastly utter silence!

Wordsworth (it will be enough to stop here so far as he is concerned) *was* the Aeolian Harp. So was Coleridge, though the Harp plays in the window in both of his poems. For a few moments in its existence the Harp has ceased to be a drunkard's toy, and becomes dignified into an image by which the deepest relations in the dualism of man and nature can be explored.

He was twenty-two when he wrote *The Eolian Harp*, feeling sure of his powers, of the goodness of life, and of his emotions, for then at least, he was in love, or believed himself in love, with Sara Fricker, with whom he sat listening, her head on his arm, to the rise and fall of the harp outside the cottage they were to live in, after their marriage, nine weeks ahead. He was full of "philosophy-dreamers, from Theuth the Egyptian to Taylor the English pagan", of "metaphysics and poetry and 'facts of the mind'", in the vernal fragrance and effluvia of his age. It was evening, in August. Jasmine and myrtle grew close around the cottage. "How exquisite the scents"—(a little odd for August 20th, like Samuel Palmer's concatenation of horse chestnuts in flower and the ripest golden corn in *A Hilly Scene*)—"snatch'd from yon beanfield"! The evening star was out, "serenely brilliant"—that star, of which he afterwards wrote (See *Anima Poetae*) "O it was my earliest affection", to which he gave one of his earliest poems, seeing it, returning from the New River, "newly bathed as well as I". The substance of the poem was "that the woman whom I could ever love would surely have been emblemized in the pensive"—("My pensive Sara" he begins the *Eolian Harp*)—"the pensive serene brightness of that planet, that we were both constellated to it, and would after death return thither". The evening was quiet, and the quietness enlarged by the murmur, far off, of the smooth, peculiar sea of the Bristol Channel:

And that simplest lute,
Placed length-ways in the clasping casement, hark!
How by the desultory breeze caressed,
Like some coy maid half-yielding to her lover—

Like Sara in fact, still not his wife—

It pours such sweet upraiding, as must needs
Tempt to repeat the wrong! And now, its strings
Boldlier swept, the long sequaceous notes
Over delicious surges sink and rise,
Such a soft floating witchery of sound—

And here comes a piece of the l.c.m. of Aeolian harping, saved by Coleridge's genius—

As twilight Elfin make, when they at eve
Voyage on gentle gales from Fairy-land,
Where melodies round honey-dropping flowers,
Footless and wild, like Birds of Paradise,
Nor pause, nor perch, hovering on untamed wing!

Now, Coleridge becoming Coleridge:

O! the one life within us and abroad,
Which meets all motion and becomes its soul,
A light in sound, a sound-like power in light,
Rhythm in all thought, and joyance every where--
Methinks it should have been impossible
Not to love all things in a world so filled;
Where the breeze warbles, and the mute still air
Is Music slumbering on her instrument.

And thus, my love! as on the midway slope
Of yonder hill I stretch my limbs at noon,
Whilst through my half-closed eyelids I behold
The sunbeams dance, like diamonds on the main,
And tranquil muse upon tranquillity;
Full many a thought uncalled and undetained,
And many idle flitting phantasies,
Traverse my indolent and passive brain,
As wild and various as the random gales
That swell and flutter on this subject lute!

*And what if all of animated nature
Be but organic harps diversely framed,
That tremble into thought, as o'er them sweeps
Plastic and vast, one intellectual breeze,
At once the Soul of each, and God of all?*

THE HARP OF AEOLUS

I need not add the conclusion, the reproof from Sara's eyes at such
"dim and unhallowed" thoughts, such

Bubbles that glitter as they rise and break
On vain Philosophy's aye-babbling spring,

the concluding submission to the God

Who with his saving mercies healed me,
A sinful and most miserable man,
Wildered and dark, and gave me to possess
Peace, and this cot, and—

unmarried, still untested, and unexplored, her "fretfulness" still
unknown—

—and thee, dear honoured maid!

No wonder Coleridge loved this vernal poem of his twenty-third
year—"the most perfect poem I ever wrote"; the poem of the best
and happiest equipoise of his powers, of himself and nature. But the
poem had an ancestor, direct—that early sonnet *To the Evening Star*.
There, first, is the wedding sense, the star which there, too, he had
called "serenely brilliant"; and above all there, first, is the "joyance",
of *The Eolian Harp*, in the "pure joy" which the star inspires, the
joy and calm delight, which Coleridge held to be the source of good
and genuine composition:

O meek attendant of Sol's setting blaze,
I hail, sweet star, thy chaste effulgent glow;
On thee full oft with fixed eye I gaze
Till I, methinks, all spirit seems to grow.

O first and fairest of the starry choir,
O loveliest 'mid the daughters of the night,
Must not the maid I love like thee inspire
Pure joy and *calm* delight?

Must she not be, as in thy placid sphere
Serenely brilliant? Whilst to gaze a while
Be all my wish 'mid Fancy's light career
E'en till she quit this scene of earthly toil;
Then Hope perchance might fondly sigh to join
Her spirit in thy kindred orb, O star benign!

Here, in fact, in this sonnet, Coleridge's deepest insights begin,
actually and verbally, when he was eighteen and still at school. *The*

Eolian Harp grows out of the Evening Star poem, adding the new image, the new depth; and *Dejection* grows out of them both.

One cannot read and compare *The Eolian Harp* and *Dejection* without remembering Dr. I. A. Richards on their depths and on their implication with Coleridge's most central feeling and thinking. He shows, in his book *Coleridge on Imagination*, that, however troubled Coleridge may have been about the vernal, intoxicating pantheism of the organic harps under one intellectual breeze, he still twines into one the realist and the projective attitudes to nature; that the simpler Wordsworth sticks more to pantheism and his "life of things" (in support of which he might have pointed to that "splendid evening" which in his youth had brought those Aeolian visitations onto his soul). But since my concern is less with Coleridge than with Aeolian Harps, I may as well go on at once to the tragic emotional contrast of the third and the two early poems.

It was the same harp, no doubt, that had been played in the vernal summer of Clifton, the harp which Lamb saw in the study at Greta Hall. It was spring, 4th April, 1802, a "sweet Primrose-month" outwardly; a cold, unvernial unvegetative spring in a heart dead or dying. It was again evening, or rather night with a crescent moon, a night which was tranquil, but with promise, in the text from *The Ballad of Sir Patrick Spence*, of a deadly storm. A light breeze only played on the harp in the window, intermittently, but it was

... dull sobbing draft, that drones and rakes
Upon the Strings of this Eolian Lute
Which better far were mute

The new moon, "rimmed and circled with a silver Thread", foretelling rain and squally blast, shone down "winter-bright" into the study (instead of that hopeful and "serenely bright" evening star of Clevedon and the New River sonnet); and there, in the room, Coleridge, with no cheek of someone he was soon to marry on his arm, was alone; dejected after ill-health, growing disharmony with Sara (cf. "the gloom and distresses of those around me for whom I ought to be labouring and cannot": also the still earlier "Memorandum: not to adulterize my time by absenting myself from my wife"—an aide-mémoire for the conduct of all authors); after opium, after the severest intellectual questings and discoveries. Above all, he was in love, in *hopeless* love with Sara Hutchinson (whose sister married Wordsworth). In November 1799, he had recorded in Latin, in his note book how he had held Sara Hutchinson's hand, and how the poisoned and incurable arrow of love had driven into him. And that

THE HARP OF AEOLUS

night, it was in the form of a letter to Sara, as he walked about, that he composed *Dejection*. He wished for the quick coming of the storm's energy—

O! Sara! that the Gust ev'n now were swelling
And the slant Night-shower driving loud and fast—

Because, as he added in the later published version—

Those sounds which oft have rais'd me, whilst they awed,
And sent my soul abroad,
Might now perhaps their wonted impulse give,
Might startle this dull pain, and make it move and live!

Might, and *perhaps*; but forgetting the harp and the wind and the coming storm, he moved into the terrible lines of the hopelessness and tenderness and absoluteness of his love which could have no fullness, into the cries of the deadness of his heart, the contrast of 1802 with the hope and the star of 1790, the love of 1795.

And those thin Clouds above, in flakes and bars,
That give away their Motion to the Stars;
Those Stars, that glide behind them, or between,
Now sparkling, now bedimm'd, but always seen;
Yon crescent Moon, as fix'd as if it grew
In it's own cloudless, starless Lake of Blue—
A boat becalm'd! dear William's Sky Canoe!
I see them all, so excellently fair!
I see, not feel, how beautiful they are.

My genial Spirits fail—
And what can these avail
To lift the smoth'ring Weight from off my Breast?
It were a vain Endeavor,
Tho' I should gaze for ever
On that Green Light that lingers in the West!
I may not hope from outward Forms to win
The Passion and the Life whose Fountains are within!

Then, as he first wrote the poem down, he comes back to the evening star, and the first sonnet. He thinks of the new Sara, looking, as he is then looking out of the room, on to the same heaven. The first Sara had looked with him at Celvedon on the evening star, the imaginary woman of his schooldays had looked on it:

THE HARP OF AEOLUS

In my first Dawn of Youth that Fancy stole
With many secret Yearnings on my Soul.
At eve, sky-gazing in "ecstatic fit"
(Alas! for cloister'd in a city School
The Sky was all I knew of Beautiful)
At the barr'd window often did I sit,
And oft upon the leaded School-roof lay,
And to myself would say—
There does not live the Man so stripp'd of good affections
As not to love to see a Maiden's quiet Eyes
Uprais'd, and linking on sweet Dreams by dim Connections
To Moon, or Evening Star, or glorious western Skies—
While yet a Boy, this thought would so pursue me,
That often it became a kind of Vision to me!

In the poem as we knew it, and as Dr. Richards knew it when he wrote on Coleridge, before Ernest de Selincourt published the original version,¹ Coleridge made the completer restatement of his doctrine of man's creative interchange with nature, "the ambiguity (or rather completeness)", as Dr. Richards declares, "in Coleridge's thought", before the Harp broke again into the poem. *Dejection* gained dramatically in that way, as he finally stated the doctrine in the black recognition of his own loss of that creative power. But he struck out something like a hundred lines of examination of his love for Sara Hutchinson, ending:

But O! to mourn for thee, and to forsake
All power, all hope, of giving comfort to thee—
To know that thou art weak and worn with pain,
And not to hear thee, Sara! not to view thee—
 Not sit beside thy Bed,
 Not press thy aching Head,
 Not bring thee Health again—
 At least to hope, to try—
By this Voice, which thou lov'st, and by this earnest Eye—
Nay, wherefore did I let it haunt my Mind
The dark distressful Dream!
I turn from it—

And the Aeolian Harp breaks in again—

I turn from it, and listen to the Wind
Which long has rav'd unnoticed! What a Scream

¹ In *Essays and Studies*, English Association, XXII, 1937.

THE HARP OF AEOLUS

Of agony, by Torture lengthen'd out
That Lute sent forth! O thou wild Storm without!
Jagg'd Rock, or mountain Pond, or blasted Tree,
Or Pine-Grove, whither Woodman never clomb
Or lonely House, long held the Witches' Home,
Methinks were fitter Instruments for Thee,
Mad Lutanist!

After the Harp, in calmness, comes the familiar, terrible statement, and as he restates it and elaborates it, so his use of words, words of marriage against death, remind him, and remind us, of that equipoise which preceded his own wedding six years before, which had been both the wedding with Miss Fricker and that wedding with nature, foretold still earlier in the sonnet. He brings back hope and the Clevedon cottage, with its jasmine, window-peeping rose, and "myrtles fearless of the mild sea air", and the Joy:

Yes, dearest Sara, yes!
There *was* a time when tho' my path was rough,
The Joy within me dallied with Distress;
And all Misfortunes were but as the Stuff
Whence Fancy made me Dreams of Happiness;
For Hope grew round one, like the climbing vine,
And Leaves and Fruitage, not my own, seem'd mine.

But now—now at last the apex of the tragedy of his life:

But now Ill Tidings bow me down to Earth,
Nor care I that they rob me of my Mirth—
But Oh! each Visitation
Suspends what nature gave me at my Birth,
My shaping spirit of Imagination!

Sara Hutchinson, "a Heart within my Heart"—not the discordant conjunction with Sara Fricker, is the first cause; and Sara Hutchinson is the explanation of the doubly difficult seeming lines, kept in the final ode, on nature and the natural man, for the natural man is this love for her:

For not to think of what I needs must feel
But to be still and patient all I can;
And haply by abstruse Research to steal
From my own Nature, all the Natural man—
This was my sole Resource, my wisest plan!
And that, which suits a part, infects the whole
And now is almost grown the Temper of my Soul.

THE HARP OF AEOLUS

Finally comes the Wedding, the Shroud, nature and joy—the re-statement of that centrality of Coleridge's life as a poet, so elaborated since his childhood's intimation of it before the Evening Star:

O Sara! we receive but what we give,
And in *our* life alone does Nature live
Our's is her Wedding Garment, our's her Shroud—
And would we aught behold of higher Worth
Than that inanimate cold World allow'd
To the poor loveless ever anxious Crowd,
Ah! from the Soul itself must issue forth
A Light, a Glory, and a luminous Cloud
Enveloping the Earth!

The "pure joy" of the sonnet actually inspired by the star, and to be inspired by woman, and the "joyance" celebrated in *The Eolian Harp*, open out from this line onward in the full explication of Joy:

And from the Soul itself must there be sent
A sweet and potent Voice, of it's own Birth
Of all sweet Sounds, the Life and Element.
O pure of Heart! thou need'st not ask of me
What this strong music in the Soul may be,
What and wherein it doth exist,
This Light, this Glory, this fair luminous Mist,
This beautiful and beauty-making Power!
Joy, innocent Sara! Joy, that ne'er was given
Save to the pure, and in their purest Hour
Joy, Sara! is the Spirit and the Power
That wedding Nature to us gives in Dower
A new Earth and new Heaven,
Undreamt of by the Sensual and the Proud!
Joy is that strong Voice, Joy that luminous Cloud—
We, we ourselves rejoice!
And thence flows all that charms or ear or sight,
All melodies, the Echoes of that Voice,
All Colors a Suffusion of that Light—

Here again reappear the actual words used before, the *soul*, the *sound*, the *light*, the *power*. Here again is the wedding sense. Here again in the "luminous Cloud enveloping the Earth" Coleridge repeats from the Clevedon poem, *the clouds that late were rich with light*; and, back beyond this middle poem, the actual verbal source of Joy as the *spirit* and the power given only to the pure at their purest,

THE HARP OF AEOLUS

may be found in the sonnet:—I gaze, he had written in the sonnet, on the Evening Star, on the planet of love

Till I, methinks, all *spirit* seem to grow.

One thing which Coleridge does add is the Glory, no generalized superlative, but another image of projection—the halo one sees, in the rainbow colours, round the head part of one's shadow when it is projected by a rising or setting sun down on to mist. Coleridge used it again of Sara Hutchinson in absence and unattainment as the image with a Glory round its head which the woodman sees at dawn

The enamoured rustic worships its fair hues,
Nor knows he *makes* the shadow, he pursues.

Using the Glory in *Dejection* only adds to the statement of his attitude to nature. The actual links between the sonnet, *The Eolian Harp* and *Dejection* are so close, as I say, that one cannot separate the three poems. Coleridge was no intermittent, occasional poet but one who wrote in a developing, ordered network of images. And the second and third poems are indissolubly bound by the Aeolian Harp in the window, and by the difference between its two utterances

... what a Scream
Of agony, by Torture lengthen'd out
That Lute sent forth!

So the mad lutanist of the wind, succeeding that "intellectual breeze at once the Soul of each and God of all", the wind which would have done better to choose a jagged rock, or mountain pond, or blasted tree for instrument, talked only through the harp, on that midnight of April 4th, of the groans of the wounded in defeat, and then as it dropped, of a lost child in some tender poem by Wordsworth.

Coleridge's dead heart. His soul that could not receive because it could not project. The blasted tree or Pine Grove: "The Pine Tree blasted at the top," he wrote in his note-book, "was applied by Swift to himself as a prophetic emblem of his own decay. The Chestnut is a fine shady tree, and its wood excellent, were it not that it dies away at the heart first. Alas! poor me!"¹

¹ Six years afterwards, in May 1808, Coleridge wrote down a note on the caged singing bird he heard from his bedroom at the *Courier* office: "It is in prison, all its instincts ungratified, yet" (unlike Coleridge, also in prison, also with his instincts ungratified) "it feels the influence of spring and calls with unceasing melody to the Loves that dwell in field and greenwood bowers, unconscious, perhaps, that it calls in vain. O are the songs of a happy, enduring day-dream? Has the bird hope? or does it abandon itself to the joy of its frame, a living harp of Eolus? O that it could do so!

Aeolian Harps, the evening star, and joy were also ingredients of his poem *The Nightingale* (1798).

Never before, and never since has the Harp sounded so sweetly, so screamingly, or to such purpose. Scott and Tom Moore used it prettily. Shelley strung it with some grandeur in *Prometheus Unbound*—

Ione: . . . What is that awful sound
Panthea: 'Tis the deep music of the rolling world
 Kindling within the strings of the waved air,
 Aeolian modulations.

—and, in a cancelled scrap for *Epipsychidion*, with an advance towards Coleridge's depth, derived, I should say from Coleridge:

There is a Power, a Love, a Joy, a God
 Which makes in mortal hearts its brief abode,
 A Pythian exhalation, which inspires
 Love, only love—a wind which o'er the wires
 Of the soul's giant harp . . .

In an occasional way, but grandly so, with a great pathos, De Quincey employs the Harp as he recalls how he stood on a summer evening, during childhood, by his sister's corpse: ". . . whilst I stood a solemn wind began to blow—the saddest that ear ever heard. It was a wind that might have swept the fields of mortality for a thousand centuries. Many times since, upon summer days, when the sun is about the hottest, I have remarked the same wind arising and uttering the same hollow, Memnonian, but saintly swell: it is in this world the one great audible symbol of eternity. And three times in my life have I happened to hear the same sound in the same circumstances—viz., when standing between an open window and a dead body on a summer day.

Instantly, when my ear caught this vast Aeolian intonation, when my eye filled with the golden fullness of life, the pomps of the heavens above, or the glory of the flowers below, instantly a trance fell upon me. . . ."

This is one out of many examples of the marriage of the harp to Memnon—the colossal Egyptian statue which, at sunrise, gave a sound like a breaking string in greeting to his mother Eos, the dawn (or used to do so until Memnon was repaired under Septimus

Severus). Christopher Smart had married the two of them: first in his poem on Yawning, in 1752, then in his *Inscription*:

Hail, heav'nly harp, whose Memnon's skill is shewn
That charm'st the ear with musick all thine own!

And Wordsworth did the same in his poem about the waterfall and the pleasure-ground on the Banks of the Bran.

The Harp was indeed exported, an English born element in Romanticism, to Russia (where the poet Zhukorvsky wrote an Ossianic poem upon "Aeolus's Harp"), to Germany, to France, to America. F. H. von Dahlberg, director of the theatre at Mannheim, where Schiller's *Die Räuber* was first played, wrote (1801) a pretty little book *Die Aeolsharfe. Ein Allegorischen Traum* illustrating an eight-stringed harp, and saying the harp is still so little known in Germany "that he needs first to describe it"; he tells German readers where they can buy Aeolian Harps in London. Also being a good German adapter, he wants to improve the harp. "Till now," he says, "the Aeolian Harp has been used simply in rooms, especially of country houses and summer houses; but I believe it could be much better employed. Often accompanied by this instrument in my lonely wanderings this summer, I discovered that in open fields, or on eminences, where there are stronger currents of winds, it played not only more briskly, but also more strongly and with a fuller tone. So one could use it in gardens, in sequestered arbours, in dark coverts and groves, on hills and on heights, if one used for it air or wind pipes specially devised so as to direct the stream of air on to the instrument, giving it the required direction. These pipes would be easy to put up in open summer houses; and they must, especially if one were to fit larger harps with stronges of a deeper bass, or several of varying strength tuned in harmony and octaves, produced the most astonishing result."

But Jean Paul, as an admirer of England, knew about the Harp long before von Dahlberg wrote his book; so did Schiller, who has an Aeolian metaphor in his poem *Bürde der Frauen*. In Jean Paul's *Hesperus* which he wrote in the year of Coleridge's *Eolian Harp*, Sebastian Horion, son of the English peer Lord Horion (no "z" has dropped out), goes to meet Dahorè, an Indian sage, who lives only on fruit and water, at Marienthal, where he teaches astronomy to girls:

"He stood at last under the birch trees; and the music (like that of an harmonica) which had first flown over Paradise upon Paradise and through hedges of flowers was now loud around him, but Sebastian

saw nothing but a high grassy altar and a deep grassy seat. 'From what invisible hand,' he thought shudderingly, 'do these sounds come, which seem to slide from angels when they are flying over the next world, or from mingling souls when so great a bliss breathes out into a sigh, and the sigh dissipates itself into a distant, dying sound?'

The unrecognized melody . . . came from an Aeolian Harp placed on a weeping birch. And whenever Dahore came here at night, he mingled those breathed out sounds in among the whispering leaves, like blossoms, to exalt himself when he looked up at the sublime night."

A case, no doubt, of Coleridge's "nimiety", which coinage would also apply to Edgar Allan Poe's catalogue in which the Harp is mentioned as one of his sources of "Supernal Beauty". But at least in Jean Paul, the Harp is still a Harp (though one doubts, from that *Hesperus*); and it was still a Harp when it penetrated (later, it seems) into France. At first, if the French view is typified by those Paris critics who, in 1824, disparaged Constable's pictures as meaningless noises from a Wind Harp, the French merely dismissed it as a toy. But Berlioz, as one would expect, drank in its music, writing in 1844 in his *Voyage musical en Allemagne et en Italie* "On one of those sombre days, which sadden the close of the year, read Ossian and listen to the fantastic harmony of an Aeolian Harp hung at the top of a tree stripped of its leaves, and I defy you not to experience a deep feeling of sadness, of surrender, a vague and boundless yearning for another existence, an immense loathing for this one, in a word, a sharp attack of spleen linked to a temptation toward suicide." Nimiety not confined to the Germans; and it extended beyond Berlioz to his friend, the musician Jean George Kastner. Kastner had a special wind harp in a small tower high in his garden at Versailles, and I commend his book-cum-music, *La Harpe d'Eole et la Musique Cosmique: Études sur les rapports des phénomènes sonores de la nature avec la science et l'art, suivies de Stéphen, ou la Harpe d'Eole, grand monologue lyrique avec chœurs*—for there you will find, at last, all nature's resonant phenomena, the musical drops of Fingal's Cave, the music of the spheres, the dawn-notes of Memnon, David's Harp in the Talmud, the Filaobaume of the Isle of Bourbon, and the Harp of Kircher and Oswald.

This trip abroad might be extended no doubt elsewhere, beyond France and Germany and a glance at Russia and America (where Thoreau wrote a poem *Rumors from An Aeolian Harp*, and where his friend Emerson published a long Harp passage in 1867, and in 1876

A Maiden Speech of the Aeolian Harp, in which the new harp asks its owners for the wind and the window; and where the Harp again produced what I suppose to be one of the last of its own poems, through Herman Melville, as far on as 1888); but I must wind the affair back once more into the country of its exploitation, if not of its birth.

After Coleridge, Wordsworth, Shelley, and de Quincey? With Coleridge, as I have said of Berlioz, and Kastner and Jean Paul, the Harp was still a Harp, an oblong, pinewood box, with strings, in the window of the study and the wind howling off Skiddaw; in the poem, in, and indeed of, the soul. Then rapidly it became a couple of words, a single word, a long harmonious adjective, an ornament of fancy, a poetical finery. Not even in fact Nature's Music, worth a poem upon its own. It was wearing out. In its day, however it began, however it fared through the eighteenth century with many little nature-drunken poets, it had indeed performed as the music of Paradise, of religion rather than fairyland, in Smart, Coleridge, Wordsworth, and Shelley. As the earth and all that therein is were for Jakob Boehme (who helped Coleridge, not alone among English romantics, to "keep alive the heart in the head" and skirt "the sandy deserts of utter unbelief") the pattern of the perfections of Paradise, so I suspect, Aeolian-harp-music was in some sense the pattern of the perfect music of eternity—at one time, anyway. But Nature lost its share of divinity quickly enough (except in a few rarities out of their time), and became an object just of earthly "worship"; and even worship gave way to transcription of detail, to picking nature's pocket, to borrow a condemnation from Coleridge; to the moral "truth to nature", the accuracy of the Preraphaelites, and of Tennyson burrowing his little, individual eye into the colours, inside a chestnut-flower, for a comparison. Mystery too became of the earth, or more accurately, became an orchid of flamboyance, without roots, hanging in the air of a not very salubrious forest of nonsense. It is not difficult to make a choice between the humming-birds and lion's eyeballs of Smart, and the orchidaceous miasma of Rossetti. But, in any case, high intellect is not conspicuous in Romanticism, except in the few, in Coleridge, as in Goethe, in Wordsworth, in Shelley (and least of all was it conspicuous in English painting). Remove the divinity: not much is left except simplicity, or the simple silly mystery of the orchids and the smell. Yet the Aeolian Harp took some time to die here in England. After Coleridge, it was an occasional frippery for Clare, and for Keats, who liked, and stuck to the long adjective—

THE HARP OF AEOLUS

sounds Aeolian

Breathed from the hinges, as the ample span
Of the wide doors disclosed a place unknown
Some time to any but those two alone

—which might have been a trick of Beckford's in the doorways of Fonthill. Sounds Aeolian are shreds of prettiness in Darley's poems, and in Tennyson; Allingham indeed wrote actual poems about the Harp so late and out of date as 1854, but only because he had come tardily into life with the mud on his shoes of the outer darkness of Donegal; by then the Harp, as one might expect, tells him only of

Youth, and prime, and life, and time
For ever, ever fled away!

But one could still buy an Aeolian Harp easily enough in the 'sixties—from twelve and six upwards according to wood and workmanship. So far as I know the Harp of Aeolus makes its last major appearance, as it first appeared, with a Scot, fulfilling a function something between the seduction of Celinda and the self-enchantment of Dahore. The Scot is R. L. Stevenson in *The Beach of Falesá*: the trader on the South Sea island finds the mumbo-jumbo temple which the Beach-comber uses to bewitch and intimidate the islanders. "Well, I had got to a place where there was an underwood of what they call wild coco-nut—mighty pretty with its scarlet fruit—when there came a sound of singing in the wind that I thought I had never heard the like of. It was all very fine to tell myself it was the branches; I knew better. It was all very fine to tell myself it was a bird; I knew never a bird that sang like that. It rose and swelled, and died away and swelled again; and now I thought it was like someone weeping only prettier; and now I thought it was like harps; and there was one thing I made sure of, it was a sight too sweet to be wholesome in a place like that." He found it was a square thing in a tree—"and the idea of a square thing that was alive and sang knocked me sick and silly." He tried praying. "As soon as I had made an end in proper style, I laid down my gun, walked right up to that tree, and began to climb. I tell you my heart was like ice. But presently, as I went up, I caught another glimpse of the thing, and that relieved me, for I thought it seemed like a box; and when I had got right up to it I near fell out of the tree with laughing. A box it was, sure enough, and a candle box at that, with the brand upon the side of it; and it had banjo strings stretched so as to sound when the wind blew. I believe they

call the thing a Tyrolean harp, whatever that may mean" (footnote: "Aeolian").

That was the end—the mumbo-jumbo temple went up with dynamite and smoke—and within ten years (*The Beach of Falesá* was published in 1892) a correspondent had to write to "Notes and Queries" to find out about the Harp and its story.

It was the end of Machinamentum X and Eustathius on Homer. Except, after all, that the Harp of Aeolus is an agreeable toy—a toy that fascinates even the neutral mind; that the pretty adjective *Aeolian* still crops up now and again like an unpredicted mushroom on the lawn; that it might be just as well to add a Harp—to the English department of every university.

(I must add this note on playing Aeolian Harps: If you can get one—it took me three years to acquire a late specimen made in the 'sixties or 'seventies—tune the strings in unison, as nearly as you can; but tune them on the slack side. Choose a window the wind is blowing against. It does not matter whether it is a window opening up or down or outwards, the harp will work reclining or on end, as long as you shut the window onto it. You will find that the music in the house has an effect I ought to have commented on, of making one's ear sensitive to the music of sounds around the house and out-of-doors—aeroplane, motor-bicycle, etc. The Aeolian music of telegraph wires near the pole is more or less constant: the joy of Aeolian Harp music is variety, rise and fall, swell and diminuendo.)

4

THE VISION OF THE ENGLISH ROMANTICS

How did English romantic artists see? What did they see, most of them, in that run of English romantic art, from 1780 roughly to 1840? They saw nature and themselves. "The real," wrote Henry James, and it will serve, "represents to my perception the things we cannot possibly *not* know, sooner or later, in one way or another. . . . The romantic stands, on the other hand, for the things that, with all the facilities in the world, all the wealth and all the courage and all the wit and all the adventure, we never *can* directly know; the things that can reach us only through the beautiful circuit and subterfuge of our thought and our desire." Themselves, in the romantic vision, may be the self in search of God. More often it equals the unknowable, the thought and the desire, the yearning, the undefined feeling personal to the artist, which he must try to define. Through nature. Nature disturbed, nature with black clouds, nature in April; nature still and calm, in autumn; nature in its utmost violence; nature learned off as a language.

When the artist P. F. Poole wrote to Richard Redgrave in 1844 about his picture *The Seamstress*, English romantic art had nearly let go: "Who can help exclaiming 'Poor Soul! God help her?' If any circumstances could make me wage war against the present social arrangements, and make us go down shirtless to our graves, it is the contemplation of this truthful and wonderful picture."¹ Here is the artist moving away from nature and himself, not always a very edifying combination, into the triumphant but no more edifying rule of "truthfulness", of accuracy, charity, and morals. Yet Turner, caves, and the action of mighty forces were the things Poole had liked. He had grown up a romantic. "I should like to be buried," he had written, "in a coffin with a glass lid, and placed on the top of a high mountain, so that I could see the beautiful moon for ever."²

And romantic art had waxed a good many years, when in 1801, in his third Academy lecture, Fuseli had asked the question "Whether it be within the artist's province or not, to find or to combine a subject from himself, without having recourse to tradition or the

¹ *Richard Redgrave: A Memoir*, by F. M. Redgrave, p. 45.

² Richard Garnett, *A Hampstead Painter: The late Paul Falconer Poole, R.A., in the Hampstead Annual*, 1900.

stores of history or poetry?" He had answered "Why not, if the subject be within the limits of art and the combinations of nature; though it should have escaped observation? Shall the immediate avenues of the mind, open to all its observers, from the poet to the novelist, be shut only to the artist? Shall he be reduced to receive as alms from them what he has a right to share as common property?" That, after the burial, was a pioneer of European romanticism, born nine years before Goethe, setting up an English stone upon the grave of *Ut pictura poesis*. Long before Fuseli had come to this point of delivering revolution (a then accepted revolution) to the students of the Academy, William Hooper, in 1776, in the year of Constable's birth, had performed one of the useful preliminaries; he had translated a book which Constable, in twenty years' time was to be reading with pleasure, agreement and profit—the *Letter on Landscape Painting*, by Fuseli's godfather, Solomon Gessner. "I abandon'd my originals, I left my guides, and deliver'd myself up to my own ideas." Those "first emotions, so important to be seized". Learn "to compare the most beautiful expressions of art with nature itself and the beauties of nature with the resources of art". Admire that poet whose enthusiasm was roused by "a plant cover'd with dew and illumin'd by a bright ray of the sun". Though "the beautiful and the noble" must be sought "in the forms", Gessner is the self in art breaking through common rule. Reynolds was indeed Reynolds, and President of the Academy; but Gessner, artist and poet, was Europe's most popular author. Scores of young artists must have read him on landscape, as thousands read his innocent, if insipid *Idylls*. And 1776 is four years from our starting point of 1780.

Dates are only conveniences, only termini or boundaries gapped and full of holes. Once romantic self-expression has been practised, admitted, legislated for, it may falter, weaken, change, but it does not easily disappear from the human make-up; and even before the *terminus a quo* of the seventeen-eighties, plenty of that self-expression, plenty of that nature and self, had already been painted. For example, the vision of Alexander Cozens. Before Fuseli ever set his cloven hoof in England, Cozens had determined to put the image of a charming face before his mind, "and by it flatter my longing Soul with Visions of happiness."¹ Cozens was an eighteenth century maker of systems (his life and the life of Linnaeus are almost co-eval), yet his longing soul (unlike the soul of Stubbs) dwelt naturally, expressed itself naturally, in shadow and twilight. No one but a man of the new age, in spite of class and system, could have talked of

¹ Sketch book, *Walpole Society*, XV, 1927-28. The probable date is 1746.

"flattering" his soul—flattering it, moreover, with the image of a charming face and visions of happiness. Souls, a hundred years before, like the hart after the water-brooks, had longed for God, and did not flatter themselves that they were going to find him. It was Cozens who moulded the arch-romantic William Beckford. And Beckford spans the age of English romantic art, was the only English writer who at once gave himself naked and reckless to romanticism, who understood romantic painting, who was the patron, or purchaser, successively of the younger Cozens, of James Ward, and of Francis Danby. Romantic vision and Beckford died together in the 'forties. When in the 'eighties the vision was newly born, Beckford, at twenty-one, had mocked the accepted art with his *Memoirs of Extraordinary Painters* (1780), among whom was Sucrewasser of Vienna who went to Venice to paint in fresco on casino walls; his way there lying "through some very romantic country which he never deigned to regard, modestly conjecturing he was not yet worthy to copy nature". No, he painted snuff-boxes for gentlemen. "His most splendid performance, Salome, mother of the Maccabees, which he imitated from Titian, was sold by Soorcrout, in England."

We know plenty of Beckford, little of Cozens. Of shadow and twilight Beckford writes to Cozens in 1780:¹ "Be assured you will find me ever the same romantic Being fond of the Woods and Mountains. . . . Would to Heaven that you were but here that we might flutter together the whole day in this world of elegance and when the sun declines enjoy our favourite hour in the Woods of Boboli." In 1782 to Cozens (a letter I have already quoted in this book): "I am as calm as a Lake sheltered by Hills at Sunset when the Winds are still." In fact, no letters are so valuable as Beckford's to Cozens (Cozen's own letters have been destroyed) for getting inside the early uncomplicated vision of romantic art. They reflect what Cozens preached and felt. A letter, again of our terminus year of 1780, sets out nine tenths of the whole romantic menu:

"I am eagerly wishing for a Spirit like yours to comfort and revive my own. Nothing, I think, will prevent me daring to be happy in defiance of glory and reputation. Why should I desire the applause of Creatures I despise? rather let me enjoy that heartfelt satisfaction which springs from innocence and tranquillity. The peaceful Palace and woody Hills which surround it shall bound my desires. There will we remain—lost in our Meads and copses, wandering carelessly about, offering sacrifice to Sylvan deities and fancying

¹ The quotations are from Lewis Melville's *Life and Letters of William Beckford*.

ourselves recalled to that primaeval period when Force and Empire were unknown. I am now approaching the Age when the World in general expect me to lay aside my dreams, abandon my soft illusions and start into public Life. How greatly are they deceived, how firmly am I resolved to be a Child for ever! Next Summer I hope will give you a proof of my constancy when if I return from Rome you will find me stretched under my beeches on the Hill of Pan, or running wild amongst the Thickets which cover the Satyr's range. At night we will retire to the Cell and consult our Arabians, penetrate into remote Countries and fancy we discover the high Mountains of *Gabel al Comar*. It shall be my business to collect prints and drawings which illustrate our favourite ideas, and I flatter myself with the hopes of passing many an evening with you in their contemplation. Every month we shall invent some new Ornament for our Apartments and add some exotic rarity to its treasures. Our pleasures will be continually varying, sometimes we shall inhabit our Huts on the borders of the Lake, and sometimes our vast range of solemn subterraneous Chambers visible by the glow of lamps and filled with Cabalistic Images . . . Another moment will find us encamped upon the green Desert we were so fond of, drinking our Coffee in open Tents and dreaming ourselves in *Yomen*—Next day we shall repair to the stone of power, where to speak the Language of Fingal: 'Spirits descend by night in dark red streams of Fire'."

Unpick it, and here, in the mind of a boy of twenty-one, are all, or most of the simple elements of the vision—tranquillity, innocence, being a child, the primaeval and the primitive, of time, and of nature, pantheism, and the sylvan, neo-classic deities, mystery and the east, the cave, the glint of light off water or in fire, the darkness around light, and the demonics of power and mighty action. All the items of a programme to be developed; a programme not of painting which was to deduce its laws and rules (Addison's demand) "from the general sense and taste of Mankind"; or painting which, according to Jonathan Richardson (dead in 1745), was to "entertain and instruct", on a level with poetry, history, philosophy, and theology. No; a programme of the immediate avenues of the mind, the individual sense of the individual artist. He is licensed now to be himself. Whether by Blake, or Turner, or Constable, or Palmer, Etty, or Bonington, or J. F. Lewis, or that other orientalist, Muller, (who was oriental plus Constable), no romantic picture exists that could not be tied up to some item of this *laissez-aller* of romantic individual-

ism. One item or another is there in Blake's "Adam naming the Beasts", Constable's "Weymouth Bay", Ward's "Gordale Scar", Etty's "Youth on the Prow and Pleasure at the Helm", Turner's "Whale-Ship", or a mystical moonlight by Palmer. Once history had granted the license, it was up to any romantic artist to use it; to feel such sensations as Beckford's; to amplify them, to dignify them, to give intensity and value to them, by his own method.

In *The Harp of Aeolus*, I wrote of the two ways, the realist and the projective, of relating the self and nature. I. A. Richards put it, of Coleridge and Wordsworth, like this: "In the first doctrine, man, through Nature, is linked with something other than himself which he perceives through her. In the second, he makes of her, as with a mirror, a transformed image of his own being." The second was the commoner way with English artists; but, as in Coleridge, though with much simpler implications, there was often in one artist a co-existence of the two attitudes. But mixed. Yet mixed or separate, each way can lead to an intoxication. The realist, pantheist doctrine leads to a more objectified, solidier vision, in which the reality of things can become more than real. That is where, as artists, Blake and Samuel Palmer, so sharply divide—Palmer seeking a God outside himself, through and beyond Nature, Blake as one of the ten intellectuals of romanticism, making something intricate, central and valuable of the projective attitude—"There is no Natural Religion". "All religions have one source. The true Man is the source, he being the Poetic Genius". To mirror himself, he took from nature as little as he could; and so, eventually, the weak "untruth" of his forms compared with the globular clouds and grappling, muscular, lichen and moss-solid trees of Palmer. Constable again is a self-projector, but so to speak a lay projector, who cautioned a friend on the way to hear Edward Irving preach and explain prophecies, against enthusiasm in religion; the painter of the still small voice after the fire, the painter of generalized forms to express the image of his own, relatively simple, turbulent self. Beckford, as a romantic, shows one how difficult it can be to disentangle the two attitudes: he may mirror himself in the still lake, yet both attitudes co-exist in that poem he wrote within the aspiring, insecure walls of Fonthill:

Like the low murmur of the secret stream,
Which through dark elders winds its shaded way,
My suppliant voice is heard: ah, do not deem
That on vain toys I throw my hours away!

In the recesses of the forest vale,
 On the wild mountain, on the verdant sod,
 Where the fresh breezes of the morn prevail,
 I wander lonely communing with God.

When the faint sickness of a wounded heart
 Creeps in cold shuddering through my sinking frame,
 I turn to Thee—that holy peace impart
 Which soothes the invokers of Thy awful name.

O all-pervading spirit—sacred Beam!
 Parent of life and light!—Eternal Power!
 Grant me, through obvious clouds, one transient gleam
 Of Thy bright essence in my dying hour.

No doubt one could work out a scale of vision for English romantic painters, according to Blake's single vision, two-fold, three-fold and four-fold vision. In Single Vision—"May God us keep", said Blake "From single vision and Newton's sleep"—is the bottom end of the scale where the merest reflectors belong, the simplest of the landscape or portrait hacks, the uninterpretative, those whom Palmer condemned as mere "naturalists" (Fuseli, for example, had given a tempered rebuff to the Dutchman for bordering upon negative landscape, condemning "the last branch of uninteresting subjects, that kind of landscape which is entirely occupied with the tame delineation of a given spot".) The rather less simple theists and pantheists as well as projectors, go up one in the scale. In their varying degrees and natures, Alexander Cozens's vision, Girtin's, Mulready's, Wilkie's, Crome's, Constable's (as Blake recognized), Cotman's, Bonington's, Turner's, Danby's—all have more or less of this spirituality of a two-fold vision; and three-fold vision (of which Linnell had a touch in his early years) brings us over the border into Palmer's land of sanctified moonlight and sanctified shepherds, the Beulah land of an artist, in his own words, who "will surrender to be shut up among the dead, or in the prison of the deep, so I may *sometimes* bound upwards; pierce the clouds; and look over the doors of bliss, and behold there 'each blissful deity, How he beneath the thunderous throne doth lie'."¹ Four-fold is Blake's extreme mysticism, withdrawing from nature altogether. Another thing worth remembering, worth investigating, to cross only over the edge of the whole relation of romanticism and religion, is that many of the Romantic artists did not belong to the Church of England. Blake's

¹ Grigson: *Samuel Palmer*.

religion was his own. Flaxman was a Swedenborgian, Cornelius Varley (a much underesteemed Romantic) a Sandemanian, Linnell both Baptist and Plymouth Brother, James Ward was religiously eccentric, Stothard was a dissenter. Palmer began as a Baptist and moved towards High Church and the Oxford Movement. Pugin was a Catholic. Of Palmer's intimates, Finch followed Swedenborg, Tatham followed the prophetic Irving, and Calvert became a mystical pagan. Only Richmond, becoming a mild purveyor of smooth portraits, was a conventional churchman. Much of our romantic art involved, in revolt against the common sense of deism, a religion which was peculiar and personal, as with such artists as Runge and Friedrich in Germany. And in literature, as I say, even the self-indulgent, self-intoxicating Beckford found himself in communion with God among the alders, the clouds and the mountains.

The commonest attitude, particularly as time went on, was that of an anti-intellectual, uninquisitive, projection, quietist or violent, via sunset or the mighty forces—expressed in the art of men who did not behold so very much

“ . . . of higher worth,
Than that inanimate cold world, *allow'd*
To the poor loveless ever-anxious crowd.”

Yet no matter what the attitudes, the minglings of attitude, and the individual variations may be, constant in the romantic vision are self, and—in spite of Blake—nature, in much the sense that we commonly give to the word. Even Fuseli, “put out” by nature, was an Aurelian, a keen man on butterflies; in which he was followed by Stothard, who had the entomological honour of capturing the first Mountain Ringlet, at Ambleside, in the Lake District, in 1809.¹ Indeed the new concern with nature of the romantics does arise, to some extent, out of the particular, scientific study of nature in the eighteenth century. The romantics were tempted to particularize (it was the Preraphaelites who fell, in the end). But where nature was needed for the expression of the self, for the longings of the soul, the old eighteenth century rules of art could only be modified, in this matter, and transformed, not in the main, altogether discarded. Fuseli still understood by nature “the general and permanent principles of visible objects, not disfigured by accident or distempered by disease, not modified by fashion or local habits”. Nature for Fuseli was still “a collective idea”; so, even if the particular and detailed are learned off by heart they are digested, peptonized in the romantic

¹ *Butterflies*. E. B. Ford, 1945, p. 19.

soul, and returned from sketch-book to canvas, not untruthfully, but broadly and generally. Look at the final generalization of any one of Constable's elder bushes, in *The Hay Wain*, for example, compared with a blossoming or fruiting tree of Palmer's religious realism. The atmosphere, the mood of self through nature, remained, widely speaking, more important than any of nature's frettings. So Crome writes in 1816 that "Trifles in nature must be overlooked" (not that he refrained from sketching them) "that we may have our feelings raised by seeing the whole picture at a glance, not knowing how or why we are charmed."

The romantic representation of nature, in this way, is the particularity of science diluted with soul. Thus no landscape in England was more appropriate than the landscape which romanticism discovered and exploited—the landscape of the Lake District. To understand the commoner romantic vision, look back from the doorway of the Victorian hotel onto Buttermere: watch mood diluting reality, watch the romantic soul, with its small low clouds, identical with the water-glowing air, between lake, mountain and sky, embracing and modifying everything. Nature is vaporized by Alexander Cozens and by his son (a Lake artist): nature gathers itself together, solidifies bit by bit, with the religious realists, or as the original impulses of the romantic vision weaken against materialism; but if there is detail of leaves and plants five times as solid and precise in the charming weakness and sentiment of Danby's "Disappointed Love" (1821) as in a mountain monochrome by Alexander Cozens, still mood remains pervasive: nature must still conform to the mood. The plants must droop with the girl and with her spirits and with the self-expression of the artist.

As to the individual elements and items of nature, the one most abundantly present in the romantic vision is light—from the magnificent perspective of starry, spangled universes mezzotinted away into darkness in Thomas Wright's *Original Theory of the Universe*, as early as 1750, to the wide lights of Constable ("The sky is the source of light in nature and governs everything"), and of Turner, and of Danby, the water-lights and moonlights of Palmer, and the sheens of Etty. Light pervades, floats, sparkles, shines in darkness, and, by uniting, carries out the expression of mood. It has life. Moreover, symbolizing spontaneity, its presence in pictures is related both to the spontaneity and to the colour of romantic vision, as well as to their natural expression by means of watercolour.

As art becomes the extension of self, less meditated, less reasoned, less arranged, less controlled, so spontaneity increases; so, in the

words of Constable's much admired Gessner, "A thought conceiv'd in the first warmth, an effect by which we are struck at the first view, is never so well express'd as by the strokes that are drawn at that instant." There it is, I think—there, and not in any mechanical explanation, any mere development from topography and tinting, that you find the cause of romantic watercolour; it is the quick medium of the instant, of the "immediate avenue of the mind". And when self and spontaneity decay, watercolour goes on being used in the nineteenth century, but with an intricate, large-scale, ludicrous virtuosity it was not fitted for or devised for. There too, in the flash, in the thought conceived in the first warmth, in the self, lies the cause of that absence of "design" in so much English romantic painting, that weakness of draughtsmanship. Inevitable perhaps in the very virtue of the romantic vision. Last of all, light illuminates, creates colour. Obedience to the common sense and common taste of mankind expressed itself to some degree in the unspontaneous, unnatural sobriety of monotone, in that ineluctable brown on which the Cambridge don, Henry Matthews was still insisting as late as 1817, to Constable's amusement. But as truth to self through nature supplanted that rational obedience, so, with light, natural colours—truth to colour—crept into the frame. As this truth to self through nature, or groping towards a God through nature, was, in turn, supplanted by truth to nature alone—by materialism—so colour sharpened; it lost the harmony of romantic compromise, it became more accurate, scientific, disagreeable (compare a Ford Madox Brown landscape with a Constable). The romantic feels his colours to be right: by the forties and the fifties the artist is invoking the scientific investigators of light and colour, to put them right. He is pulling sheep into the studio, and pushing Ophelia into the bath.

In the end, and outside art, comes the hideous (and rather suppositious) accuracy of the colour photograph. The photographs, for example, in 1945 in Dr. Ford's superlative book on butterflies. Just compare his plates with the illustrations in colour, in *The Aurelian* of Moses Harris in 1766. You will find it a sad comparison, illuminating things less pompously and more quickly, absolutely, than most books of the history of art.

5

THE UPAS TREE

*The Gods of the earth and sea
Sought thro' Nature to find this Tree;
But their search was all in vain:
There grows one in the Human Brain.*

THE Upas Tree was never in a nurseryman's catalogue. But its home—at any rate when I was at school—was in the heavy soil of leading articles in *The Times* and in the antique shop of the minds of the Front Bench. Under the stimulus of *The Times*, it was a question in general knowledge papers in the Lower Sixth: "Define a *terminological inexactitude*, the *Chiltern Hundreds*, a *Upas Tree*". How worn out it has become—a romantic property once like the Aeolian Harp, then a phrase for politicians—one can guess when under the first majority Labour Government, no Tory has ever used it in denunciation, ever said "The Upas Tree of Marxist Pedantry and impracticable idealism poisons the whole fair fame of the country, the old and the well tried spirit of the country's freedom of enterprise. The bodies of bank managers, of city editors, the bones of managing directors, and the broken wings of civilization will lie in deadly confusion" (—Opposition cheers—) "in deadly confusion under the all-blighting branches of this Tree of pestilential Nationalization."

The Upas Tree—so it is usually held—began as a joke, in time for the open romanticism between Monk Lewis and Pushkin. But began is too much. It was not invented by the scholarly jester George Steevens, Fellow of the Royal Society and the Society of Antiquaries, composer of a celebrated letter in which George Peele wrote of a meeting with Shakespeare in the Globe, and of obscene notes upon Shakespeare, attributed to two parsons he disliked. It was no more his invention than the Aeolian Harp had been the invention of James Oswald. Both Harp and Tree go back to the seventeenth century. What Steevens appears to have done is to have composed the Upas Tree, in the sense of composing, or arranging its horrors, as they were given out in the *London Magazine* in 1783, together with a translation from a Dutch surgeon in Java. "The existence of the Upas-tree, and the noxious powers of its gums and vapours are

certain." And within six years, in Darwin's *Loves of the Plants*, the Upas Tree did indeed begin its service in romanticism:

Where seas of glass with gay reflection smile
 Round the green coasts of Java's palmy isle;
 A spacious plain extends it's upland scene,
 Rocks rise on rocks, and fountains gush between.
 Softs breathes the breeze; eternal summers reign,
 And showers prolific bless the soil—in vain!
 No spicy nutmeg scents the vernal gales:
 No towering plantain shades the mid-day vales:
 No grassy mantle hides the sable hills;
 No flowery chaplet crowns the trickling rills:
 No step retreating on the sand impressed,
 Invites the visit of a second guest.
 Fierce in dread silence, on the blasted heath
 Fell Upas sits . . .

Darwin's notes suggest first one tree in the wide world, a Tree of Death to the Tree of Life; and then a series of trees, as though the Upas respectably belonged to a *genus*. "There is a poison tree"—here is the Tree of Death—"a poison tree in the Island of Java, which is said by its effluvia to have depopulated the country for twelve or fourteen miles round the place of its growth. It is called in the Malayan language Bohon-Upas; with the juice of it the most poisonous arrows are prepared; and to gain this, the condemned criminals are sent to the tree with proper direction both to get the juice and to secure themselves from the malignant exhalations of the tree, and they are pardoned if they bring back a certain quantity of the poison. But by the registers kept there, not one in four are said to return. Not only animals of all kinds, both quadrupeds, fish and birds, but all kinds of vegetables also are destroyed by the effluvia of the noxious tree; so that in a district of twelve or fourteen miles round it, the face of the earth is quite barren and rocky intermixed only with the skeletons of men and animals, affording a scene of melancholy beyond what poets have described or painters have delineated."

Here was something to balance the optimism of romance; something to represent evil in that heart of good and evil now acknowledged; a picturesque, vegetable death to balance the universal sprouting, in poems and pictures, of all the pretty flowers of Paradise and drawing-room; a necessary antithesis to the rising, falling trilling of the Aeolian Harp in the eglantine windows. Darwin's other details

are more sober: "The Bon Upas tree is easily recognized at a distance being always solitary"—so there was more than one tree, after all—the soil around it being barren, and as it were burnt up; the dried juice is dark brown, liquefying by heat like other resins. It is collected with the greatest caution, the person having his head, hands and feet carefully covered with linen that his whole body may be protected from the vapour as well as from the droppings of the tree. No one can approach so near as to gather the juice, hence they supply bamboes, pointed like a spear, which they thrust, obliquely, with great force, into the trunk . . . the concreted juice is formed into globules or sticks, and is kept in hollow reeds, carefully closed, and wrapped in tenfold linen The vapour of the tree produces numbness and spasms of the limbs, and if anyone stands under it bare headed, he loses his hair; and if a drop falls on him violent inflammation ensues. Birds which sit on the branches a short time drop down dead, and can even with difficulty fly over it; and not only no vegetables grow under it, but the ground is barren a stone cast around." Not only more than one tree now, but no twelve or fourteen miles of devastation.

In fact there was, indeed is, a poison tree of Java. "Upas" was the Malay for poison. As the Aeolian Harp preceded Oswald the composer, so, as I say, the Upas, in legend and in fact, preceded George Steevens and his first disciple, Erasmus Darwin. Towards the end of the authentic, poetic, spiritual usage of the Tree, its history and status were well examined, in 1838, in the first part of J. J. Bennett and Robert Brown's *Plantae Javanicae Rariores*. The natural tree is there pictured and described as *Antiaris toxicaria*. Its poison had been tested in 1811 by the surgeon, Sir Benjamin Brodie; and the tree had been described by the naturalist, Thomas Horsfield (through whom Bennett and Brown's book was published and who kept the Museum of the East India Company, in Leadenhall Street). He had communicated an "Essay on the Oopas" to a learned society in Batavia in 1812, it had been printed in Batavia in 1814, and printed again in England in 1818—a date which needs remembering. Meanwhile, Bennett and Brown show that the Javanese poison tree as a fable, or mixture of fact and fable, dates back at least to 1609, to Argensola's *Conquista de las Islas Malucas*, in which it is a large tree, causing sleep and then death to anyone who approaches it; Tavernier, the Frenchman describes the tree in his *Voyages* in 1676; Kaempfer, in *Amoenitates Exoticae*, in 1712, gives details of the dangers of collecting the juice, the birds that fall from the air, the employment of criminals; and when at last, Puck the Commentator, or George

Steevens, edited, assembled, reordered and enlivened the whole vegetable horror in the *London Magazine*, his account was rapidly translated in magazines abroad, into German and Dutch, and so on. England, leading the rest of Europe, had in effect invented another essential of Romance.

Darwin's first poetical exploitation of the Upas, in 1789, exploded with such quick effect that, two years later, one finds the Poison Tree, with some surprise, among the innocent vegetation of the New Forest in William Gilpin's *Forest Scenery*. The gentle, clerical law-giver of the picturesque was rather more intelligent, sensitive, and instrumental in the formation of romantic tastes and feeling than we perhaps realize. He included the Upas—and on thinking again, the surprise is scarcely well-founded—in his section upon celebrated trees, quoted from the *London Magazine*, and from Dr. Darwin, remarked that Darwin seemed to believe in the existence of the Tree, and also seemed to believe in it himself. The presence of the Upas in *Forest Scenery* must have been a strong aid in its romantic dispersal and success.

Everything was now ready; and I think, that in English the most moving use of the Tree, simply and by name, turned out to be Byron's. But between Darwin and Gilpin, and Byron, came William Blake and Coleridge and Southey. In the memorandum book which Coleridge filled between 1795 and 1798, in that wonderful period leading to *The Ancient Mariner*, *Kubla Khan*, *The Wanderings of Cain* and Part I of *Christabel*, he shows he is thinking about the Tree and its possibilities. "Upas-Tree—a poem," is one entry. Later, "Describe a Tartarean Forest all of Upas Trees." He did use the milder poison-tree of tropical America, the Manchineel, in his lines of 1797, *To the Rev. George Coleridge*. But the Upas Tree poem never came. Perhaps he abandoned the Tree as too theatrical, sensational and miasmal. For Southey, turn up *Thalaba* (1801):—

From that accursed venom springs
The Upas Tree of Death.

In Blake's poems, if the exploitation of the Upas is not so clear, it is deeper; and he recreated the Tree, and stripped it of the literal adjuncts of which he may have read in the *London Magazine*, in Darwin and in Gilpin.

Blake was twenty-six when the Tree was reordered by Steevens, or thirty-two when Darwin included it in *The Loves of the Plants*. In him the Upas grows first in *America* (1793), and in 1794 in *Songs of Experience* (the *Songs of Innocence and Experience*, remember, show

THE HARP OF AEOLUS

"the two contrary states of the human soul")—in the poems, *The Human Abstract* and *The Poison Tree*. Blake's Tree of Mystery has a "dismal shade", men die underneath it, but after eating of its fruit. Caterpillar and fly feed on the tree, and the Raven nests in it. It is not quite the same mythically botanical species. But if one reads through all the lines upon the Tree of Mystery in *The Book of Ahania* (1795) and in *The Four Zoas* (1795-1804), and in *Jerusalem* (1804-1820), one cannot doubt that Blake's tree has grown out of Darwin's and Steevens's. Blake associates it with "gloomy rocks", "withered valleys", and mountains; it gives out "intoxicating fumes", "spectrous dead" wail round it, its roots are irrigated by the "death sweat of Urizen's victims".¹ Blake re-creates the Tree out of Genesis and Java, and gives it an imaginative, symbolic significance by no means too recondite to share:

Pity would be no more
If we did not make somebody Poor;
And Mercy no more could be
If all were as happy as we.

And mutual fear brings peace,
Till the selfish loves increase:
Then Cruelty knits a snare,
And spreads his baits with care.

He sits down with holy fears,
And waters the ground with tears;
Then Humility takes its root
Underneath his foot.

Soon spreads the dismal shade
Of Mystery over his head;
And the Catterpillar and Fly
Feed on the Mystery.

And it bears the fruit of Deceit,
Ruddy and sweet to eat;
And the Raven his nest has made
In its thickest shade.

¹ See the references to the Tree of Mystery in the Index of Symbols, D. J. Sloss and J. P. R. Wallis: *The Prophetic Writings of William Blake*. The references are given under the "Mundane Shell". The Mundane Shell, according to Sloss & Wallis, "is the total of the errors due to reliance on the senses", and the Tree of Mystery is used with an equivalent meaning.

THE UPAS TREE

The Gods of the earth and sea
Sought thro' Nature to find this Tree;
But their search was all in vain:
There grows one in the Human Brain.

Next Byron; and Byron's more literal employment, compared with Blake's recreation of the Upas, will do more than many paragraphs to explain two diverse types of the poetic mind and poetic method. Byron and Shelley, one knows, were familiar with Erasmus Darwin's books, having sat up one night discussing Darwin on the origins of life—a discussion which caused Mary Shelley to dream the beginnings of *Frankenstein*. It was in the same year, 1818, in which Mary Shelley published *Frankenstein*, that Byron published Canto the Fourth of *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage*:

—Alas! our young affections run to waste,
Or water but the desert; whence arise
But weeds of dark luxuriance, tares of haste,
Rank at the core, though tempting to the eyes,
Flowers whose wild odours breathes but agonies
And trees whose gums are poisons; such the plants
Which spring beneath her steps as Passion flies
O'er the world's wilderness, and vainly pants
For some celestial fruit forbidden to our wants . . .

Our life is a false nature: 'tis not in
The harmony of things,—this hard decree,
This ineradicable taint of sin,
This boundless Upas, this all-blasting tree,
Whose roots is earth, whose leaves and branches be
The skies which rain their plagues on men like dew—
Disease, death, bondage—all the woes we see,
And worse the woes we see not—which throb through
The immedicable soul, with heart-aches ever new . . .

1818 was also the year in which the English publication of Thomas Horsfield's *Essay on the Oopas* replaced fable with reality; but the Upas was by now too much needed, too rooted in the century, to be felled, or killed. Horsfield also called the tree the "Antshar" (therefore *Antiaris toxicaria*), so one supposes Pushkin must have known of his paper, when the tree took Russian root as deeply as in Byron and more effectively still, in his strong poem of *Anchár*, of 1828:

THE HARP OF AEOLUS

In the pale unyielding desert
On soil that sun rays curse,
Anchár like a dreadful sentry
Stands—sole in the universe.

The sun-tortured, thirst-racked steppeland
Gave it birth in a day of wrath,
And fed the dull green of its leafage
And its roots with a poisoned broth.

Through its bark thick poison oozes
And, melting when midday comes,
Congeals again in the evening
In smooth, transparent gums.

No bird ever lights in its branches,
No tiger approaches the tree;
Alone the black storm wings brush it
And, venom-infected, flee.

If a wandering rain-cloud moistens
Its dense and unstirring leaves,
The burning sand from its branches
A poisonous dew receives.

But one man to the tree sends another
With a glance that, imperious, burns,
And the poor slave sets out on his journey
And at dawn with the poison returns.

He brings with him poisonous resin
And a branch with a few faded leaves,
And the sweat on his pallid forehead
In thick streams trickles and cleaves.

The poison he brings, and fainting
At the feet of his dread lord lies
On the bast that the tent-floor covers.
He utters no word, and dies.

But the king, in that poison steeping
His arrows with secret art,
To his enemies sends destruction
And death on each poisoned dart.¹

* Translated by Walter Morison.

THE UPAS TREE

I do not know any other use to stand beside these three, except perhaps Francis Danby's picture which he painted and exhibited two years after Byron's vision of the universal Upas Tree. This large picture, five foot six by seven foot six in its frame, astonished London. In the catalogue of the British Institution it appears as "The Upas, or Poison-Tree, in the Island of Java. *Vide* Darwin in his *Loves of the Plants*"; not far away a new stage in English sentiment was displaying itself—"Alpine Mastiffs reanimating a distressed Traveller", by Edwin Landseer. Danby followed and amplified Darwin's notes; and since the picture, now in the Victoria and Albert, is an asphaltum wreck, it is as well we have Richard and Samuel Redgrave's picture of the picture in words:¹

"To succeed in such a subject required a poetical mind, joined to powers of the highest order: no more landscape painting, no mere imitation of nature, would suffice to picture to us the gloomy horrors of this land of fear. Danby's interesting picture represents a deep chasm in a valley of dark slatey rocks, into which the pale light of the hidden moon only partially penetrates. Above the black crest of the gorge is a space of star-lit sky, with the pointed summits of a mountain range stretching away into the distance. The sides of the cleft are rugged, full of rifts and seams, and wholly bare. Vegetation there is none, but the solitary Upas growing out of the thin soil at the bottom of the valley. The whole rests in the silence of death, broken only by the drippings of a little fall of water from the gloomy rocks. The poison-seeker is in the foreground, about half-way down into the cavernous pit, and has just arrived within view of the tree and within the influence of the pestiferous vapour. He turns sickening from the sight: for at his feet are the bodies of several of his latest predecessors, while around the fearful tree the ground is white with the dry-bleached bones of multitudes who have gone before him, and perished at the moment they had reached the goal. Animals there are none, instinct has warned them from the fatal spot; but a vulture, flying over the chasm, has fallen with extended wings almost at the feet of the fainting poison-seeker. The story had been vividly told, and yet the horrors do not painfully obtrude. It is a wonderful first attempt, and shows the original poetry of Danby's mind."

There was once, around this time, a diorama of the Upas Tree to be seen in London; Danby was interested in a diorama, and it may have been on his picture that the peep-show was based. There, under

¹ Under Danby, in their *Century of Painters*.

coloured lights and changing lights, one could see the bones and the dead and the dying under the branches, and shiver, and feel what would happen if a single drop fell off the leaves onto one's neck.

A shade lower was the musical drama on the Tree staged at Covent Garden in 1822, and devised, with the acumen of a Noel Coward to everything that was in the common air, by George Colman. But there is a disappointment, which must have been felt by the audience, in this *Law of Java: A Play in Three Acts*. Colman's plot—because the hero sent to get the poison could not be killed—prevented the staging of the Tree itself. The audience were allowed no more than a Upas Tree atmosphere: "Finely dismal and romantic, for many miles round the Upas; nothing but poison'd air, mountains, and melancholy." A criminal indeed comes in back-stage, in "a wild and desolate country" of bare hills "rising one above the other, and terminating in stupendous barren Mountains"—masked, carrying a "closed urn, containing the poison". He stumbles and dies, and the hero snatches the urn, and hares back to claim his release and save his wife from the wicked ruler's harem.

That about ends the true employment of the Tree as part of the mythology of the English Romantics, along with the Harp of Aeolus, the Sarsar, or icy wind of death,¹ and much else including the Anaconda—the monstrous Cingalese snake which seized tigers and wound them round till the ribs cracked and the tiger howled with every "loud crash of its bones" (and which has been held to have begun in another of George Steevens's jokes). The Harp of Aeolus had the longest run, partly because of its nature, partly because one could not only use it on paper, but buy it in the music shops as one buys a gramophone or a wireless set. One could plant no Darwinian Upas Tree, even at Kew. Poets dropped it; and the tub-thumpers and the leader-writers picked it up.

If one can trust the *Oxford English Dictionary*, the first orator to play with the Upas Tree was Mr. Gladstone in 1868, though more than forty years before a political writer in the *Westminster Review* had written of "that Upas Tree which has since borne all the bitter fruits of Turkish oppression". Ireland, the Irish Church, was the bitter topic to which Mr. Gladstone applied the Upas, in a famous speech at Wigan. It was in his peroration. Protestant ascendancy in Ireland "is still there like a tall tree of noxious growth, lifting its head to heaven and darkening and poisoning the land so far as its shadow can extend; it is still there, gentleman",—how one can imagine the tones, from that single existing record of Gladstone's

¹ Established by Beckford, and used later by De Quincey.

THE UPAS TREE

voice, which is sometimes broadcast—"it is still there, gentlemen, and now at length the day has come, when, as we hope, the axe has been laid to the root of that tree, and it nods and it quivers from its top to its base. It wants, gentlemen, one stroke more, the stroke of these elections"!

What else could the Upas Tree do but fall, in that time, so changed from Blake's, or Byron's, or Pushkin's, a time of high blinkered morality in art, of wilful certitude, and wilful optimism—fall, and become a mere two words, devoid of all its terror and symbolism, rooted in the evil hearts of the Opposition, not in the universal heart realized by William Blake? And how many times since has "Upas Tree" gone pompously off platforms, or around the House of Commons, been scratched down by quills, flowed smoothly off fountain pens, or been tapped out even in the portable typewriter age, in the leader-writer's room? I fancy it must have sent up an etiolated sprout once or twice on what Mr. D. B. Wyndham Lewis once described as a tract of land to be presented to the public, as an open space for ever, by an anonymous donor who wished to remain anonymous till the next Birthday Honours—the south-eastern slopes, in other words, of those articles with which Mr. Garvin used to swell the *Observer*. Now, not even that. Steevens's joke is dead, after bearing great poetry and silly tropes. I have not noticed a Upas Tree for years.

6

SOME NOTES ON FRANCIS DANBY, A.R.A.

TO EDUCATE oneself in English art, and much else, the salerooms are the place; the place to meditate on the dealers in line, the quick hundred-guinea nods of Bond Street, the well-spoken auctioneer without emotions, the procession of pictures, small pictures which can be held up one in each hand, the sixties-by-eighties which need two attendants in green baize aprons before they are square on the stool for the dealers to look at with financial contempt—unless, as on the occasion I am thinking of, they happen to be by Turner or by Constable.

In this sale there were Eggs, Friths, Ettys, cows by that everlasting Victorian, Thomas Sidney Cooper, who was once, hard as it is to believe, taught by Fuseli. There were two or three pieces by Millais (2,000 guineas for one of them), the Constable (some 6,000 guineas), four Turners, three of them factory Turners, all of them a thousand to two thousand. The worst Egg, a history piece, went for more than two hundred, the best, one of his pieces of Preraphaelite modernism, for twenty. And in among this procession of nineteenth-century art, the collection of a Liverpool merchant of the nineteenth century's amplitude and wealth, in among these lots of dry and dark, of more and of less marketable merchandize, was a picture by Francis Danby. A big solemn seascape, darkened, in need of cleaning, varnishing, restretching; and sadly in need of a reputation. Four bids. Fourteen guineas. Constable, who loathed Danby and was not a charitable man where his dislikings were concerned, might have been pleased. The Victorian R.A.s, whose rubbish had been in the hundred-guinea class, might also have been pleased, for their malice, as much as any vice of Danby's, was the cause, and remains the cause, of Danby's now complete obscurity.

It was in front of such a Danby as this that another artist who was not an R.A., and had no use for the Academy, Ford Madox Brown, stood reverentially for half an hour at the exhibition.¹

"His early error had separated him from his brother artists; and he remained apart from them until his death . . ." "There was evidently some obliquity of moral sense in Danby's mind in regard to this affair . . ." "Danby defended the fault to the last rather than

¹*Preraphaelite Diaries and Letters*, ed. W. M. Rossetti, 1900, p. 84.

regretted it . . .”—to the last, to his death, in 1861, five years after exhibiting this fourteen-guinea painting, so much the superior to that particular six-thousand-six-hundred-guinea Constable, to those particular thousand-guinea and two-thousand-guinea Turners.

II

I cannot claim to have opened up the mystery and the darkness of Danby's life, or to present, finally, an estimate of his work. This is only an interim report—about an artist who is undeniably interesting, various, and persistent in his work, which illustrates a good many of the adventures and turns of English romanticism. Danby was an Irishman from Co. Wexford. When he was twenty he came over to visit London, which must then have seemed the capital of European modernism. With him were two other artists, George Petrie, who afterwards became celebrated as an Irish archaeologist, and the painter of wild landscapes, James O'Connor, who is not infrequently represented in English provincial galleries. The year was 1813. Turner was thirty-eight, eighteen years older than Danby. He had just painted "A Frosty Morning". Other artists have dated their lives from their first Turner; and Danby kept this picture in his mind. "Turner is a good example," he wrote to Petrie some forty years later, "of painting in age. He was well advanced in years" (which was not quite true) "when you and I, with our dearly remembered friend, poor James O'Connor, first visited London, when we saw his beautiful and wonderful picture of the 'Frosty Morning'." ¹ The three of them went to Wales, much as English artists under the early flush of Cézanne went to Provence. Then, his money gone, Danby started back to Ireland, walking from London to Bristol. He changed his mind, started to draw and teach in Bristol for a livelihood, married a Somerset girl, "imprudently" is the adverb used, and unluckily, and began sending his pictures up to the two major exhibitions.

At this time he painted a good many small detailed landscapes on mahogany panels, rather prosy but firm in construction, and full of a clear light—landscapes of the red rock scenery around Bristol, with the Avon twining through. They are individual and easily distinguished. Very soon he began to explore more fashionable modes of expression. He visited Norway in search of violent landscape, and swung between the two sentimentalities of mild and angry nature. Three pictures made him prominent. The Byronic, or Darwinian,

¹ *Life and Labours of George Petrie*, ed. by William Stokes, 1868.

"Upas, or Poison Tree of Java" in 1820,¹ "Disappointed Love" in 1821, and in 1822 "The Raft: Sunset at Sea after a Storm", which may, one feels, have stemmed out of Géricault's "Raft of the Medusa", exhibited in London two years before. Sir Thomas Lawrence, then President of the Academy, liked it, had it well hung, and bought it from Danby for more than a hundred guineas.² Danby moved to London on Lawrence's advice, within three years he was an A.R.A., and he found himself becoming a celebrity. Sir John Soane patronized him from his cave in Lincoln's Inn Fields, Beckford from his retreat at Bath.

As the Academy's man, Danby began to compete in wild and high "history" with the non-Academic John Martin. In 1825 he had painted a "Delivery of Israel out of Egypt". In 1826—the competition at its sharpest—Danby was at work on "The Opening of the Sixth Seal". But in that same year, Martin exhibited his sensational "Deluge", which was held, at any rate, by Danby's friends, to have been a plagiarism of Danby's idea for his own apocalypse. Martin got in first, showing his picture at the rival house of the British Institution. Beddoes the poet (no doubt a Bristol friend of Danby's) wrote to B. W. Procter in March: "Have you seen Martin's Deluge; do you like it? And do you know that it is a rascally plagiarism upon Danby? D. was to have painted a picture for the King; subject, the opening of the Sixth Seal in the Revelation: price eight hundred guineas: he had collected his ideas and scene, and very imprudently mentioned them publicly to his friends & foes—it appears; like Campbell and Lord B: and lo! his own ideas stare at him out of Martin's canvas in the Institution."³ Still, Danby finished his picture. It appeared at the Academy two years later. It was sold, not to the King, but to Beckford, who knew as well as Lawrence the difference between the powers of Martin and of Danby. Darkened, but still visible, "The Sixth Seal" now represents Danby—not very well—in the National Gallery at Dublin, the moon veiled in blood, sinking for the last time:

And I beheld when he had opened the sixth seal, and, lo, there was a great earthquake; and the sun became black as sackcloth of hair, and the moon became as blood.

And the stars of heaven fell unto the earth, even as a fig tree casteth her untimely figs, when she is shaken of a mighty wind:

And the heaven departed as a scroll when it is rolled together; And every mountain and island were moved out of their places.

¹ For a description of the "Upas", see p. 63.

² *Western Daily Press*, 20th February, 1861.

³ *Letters of Thomas Lovell Beddoes*, ed. H. W. Donner.

SOME NOTES ON FRANCIS DANBY, A.R.A.

"Nothing", it was afterwards written, when the picture was exhibited years later in Bristol, to an audience who dared not even whisper in front of it, "nothing in this painting is more calculated to strike the observer than the extraordinary and powerful combination of opposite lights:—the red scorching glare of volcanic eruption, that fills the background—the vivid glare of the lightning,—the leaden twilight of the foreground, and the calm pure light of heaven, are evidences of a genius, bold, daring, and, in this instance, unparalleled."¹ He had two more apocalyptic canvases in the next Academy, in 1829.

But to go back to the year when Martin forestalled him. In 1826 he had exhibited "Christ Walking on the Sea". George Cumberland had written to his father, Blake's old friend, in Bristol, "Danby certainly stands first in the historical: his picture of Christ, walking on the sea, as described in the Bible, at night, is quite equal to Rembrandt. As yet it is not sold, but I understand it will be for five hundred guineas."² Somewhere, and somehow, about this time Danby and Constable fell out. There is a hint of ill-feeling in one of Constable's letters. But the enmity is plain in the English version of a poem in Latin by one of Danby's friends, the Bristol connoisseur, John Eagles. The poem praises the Danby themes from fairyland, Greek myth, and the Bible. Paint, it says, fairy and satyr, and nymph and faun

Not vulgar bumkins coarse, ill-bred,
All sweating for their daily bread

Paint

. . . themes sublime—the fiery rain,
Departing Lot, the blazing plain;
Heaven's vengeance upon Egypt dealt;
Its blood,—its darkness to be felt;
—The sinners creeping into cleft
And hole of rock,—the land bereft,—
The awful pause, till wrath awake,
And God arise the world to shake.
These, these are themes, that may proclaim,
So DANBY finds, an artist's fame.

¹ Broadside in British Museum Library, on the exhibition of the Sixth Seal at the Bristol Institution. See also *Western Daily Press*, 13th February, 1861.

² Richard Garnett: *Gleanings from the Cumberland Papers*, in the *Hampstead Annual*, 1904-5.

THE HARP OF AEOLUS

Learn this, ye painters of dead stumps,
Old barges, and canals, and pumps,
Paint something fit to see, no view
Near Brentford, Islington, or Kew—
Paint any thing,—but what you do.¹

Just the year before, with old barge, dead stumps, canal and pump Constable had exhibited his "Dedham Lock".

Leslie bowdlerized his Constable, whose character had its sharp, malicious facet, a certain cunning of the peasant from Suffolk. Constable preferred, as he once said, the still, small voice to the vogue for vast revelations. But he was a friend of John Martin's—at least, on the surface,—and Martin and Danby were on opposite sides. Constable too was an A.R.A. at this time, but one who was not in love with the Academy. Once, some years on, after he had answered an attack on Martin, delivered from the Academy side, Martin was assured by Constable that the Academy could do him no good. His reply to the attack had been "that John Martin looked at the Royal Academy from the Plains of Nineveh, from the Destruction of Babylon, etc". And then Constable added, "I am content to look at the Academy from a gate, and the highest spot I ever aspired to was a windmill".² Danby was volatile, an Irishman, and fashionable, Constable quiet, English, and neglected; but whatever caused the ill-feeling, whether it was Martin, or whatever it was, it sharpened acutely in 1829, with the Academy elections. Danby was defeated by one vote, and that vote elected Constable.³ And one may wonder whether Constable, as well as the election, or defeat, had any share in the great mystery, which blossomed, almost at once, in Danby's life. Constable, as he showed with John Linnell, who had once been his friend, was not the man to let go of his enmities.

III

It was in 1829, late in the year, that the great rumpus occurred, hidden deep and dark behind the biographical velvet of Victorian decency. Let us look at some of the hints. Richard and Samuel Redgrave, in their *Century of Painters* (1866):

Why was Danby never R.A.? . . . Suffice it to say, most emphatically that it was not for want of a sense of the great merit of the

¹ *Rhymes Latin and English*, Felix Farley (John Eagles), 1826. The translation was by Coleridge's friend J. M. Gutch. For the Constable letter (1828), see *Letters of John Constable, R.A. to C. R. Leslie R.A.*, ed. Peter Leslie, p. 10.

² *John Martin, Painter*, Mary L. Pendered, 1923, p. 180.

³ Hodgson and Eaton: *Royal Academy and Its Members*, 1905.

SOME NOTES ON FRANCIS DANBY, A.R.A.

painter: not that his art was unappreciated by his brother members; hardly even that he made a false step involving the council of that day in many annoyances, and bringing disgrace on art; since this might have been overlooked as time dimmed its recollection, had not Danby defended the fault to the last rather than regretted it. One who wrote during Danby's lifetime, and when the cause of his being overlooked in the Academy elections must have been well known, after abusing the Academy in vulgar language for its neglect of the painter, passes over his offence, merely saying, "An unhappy marriage and its concomitants shivered his household gods"; fine words and ambiguous, and so let them remain. There was evidently some obliquity of moral sense in Danby's mind in regard to this affair . . .

Richard Redgrave: A Memoir, by F. M. Redgrave (1891):

Redgrave records in his journal that in 1853 he wrote to Danby, asking if he would care to be proposed, as A.R.A.s were now eligible, for the Academicians' Club. Danby replied with a heavy NO. He would not care to be proposed, not unless the R.A.s invited him; and he had other things in his letter to say on the Academy. And Redgrave adds "Poor Danby's strictures would seem to imply a strange forgetfulness of the real cause of his position, which was due to a scandal that the Academicians could not condone."

Richard Garnett, in the *Dictionary of National Biography*:

Danby struck on the rock of domestic difficulties . . . chiefly culpable, and highly culpable . . . imputations cast upon him were never made publicly known . . . moral perversity, not to say obliquity . . . he suddenly left London, declaring he would never live there again, and that the Academy, instead of aiding him, had, somehow or other, used him badly. Some insurmountable domestic difficulty overtook him also, and for eleven or twelve years he lived on the Lake of Geneva, a Bohemian with boat-building fancies.

The Art Journal, in his obituary (1861):

We are acquainted with the alleged ground of his rejection, but there are many extenuating circumstances which . . . ought to have proved sufficient vindication to warrant his admission among the

privileged forty. The Academy will never get rid of the charge of having, upon evidence not altogether tenable, repudiated one of the greatest painters of the age and country.

Strickland's *Dictionary of Irish Artists*:

A hasty and imprudent marriage which was destined to have unfortunate effects upon his future career.

What was the answer? And why did Danby go into exile? And why was his name dropped from the canon of English artists? I wanted to find out, if only to show how art and morality were unctuously, damagingly confused, if only to repay Richard Redgrave for his priggish pronouncements, if only to repay him for another entry, or two other entries in his journal, his insolence to Courbet, upon whose "L'Atelier" he "could hardly trust" himself to say what he thought "of its coarseness of conception, of execution and design . . . the whole is wrought with the execution of a house-painter who has just taken up art"; his self-satisfaction: "I have indeed to thank God for many blessings . . . I have been elected a Royal Academician and my pictures have sold well."¹

Evidently the truth was still known to Richard Garnett,—or the Academy's version of the truth. I wrote to the Academy; but if there is anything in the Academy's records, there it stays, not to be divulged. So back again to the *D.N.B.*, and to the lives of all who might have known Danby. One of Danby's sons, Thomas Danby, was an artist, and there in the entry for him, was a clue: "He lived much with Paul Falconer Poole." And Poole? He was a Bristol artist: he "married Hannah, widow of Francis Danby, A.R.A.". He, too, had come up to London; and very oddly, he too had disappeared from London in 1829 or 1830; not going back to Bristol, as one might expect, not going abroad, but apparently to Southampton, and for seven years his name is missing from the catalogues of the Academy. So obviously Danby, and Poole, and exile, and the rock of domestic difficulties, were all mixed up.

Minor clues attached themselves. Poole and Danby "were at one time a good deal together" (the brothers Redgrave). George Cumberland, in a letter to his son about Poole in London: "He is well known to Mr. Danby, I believe, and this will be serviceable."² William Bell Scott on Poole: "He was a man with a strain of the savage in his blood, and a good hater."³ Poole's obituary in the

¹ *Richard Redgrave: A Memoir*, by F. M. Redgrave.

² Richard Garnett, *op. cit.*

³ Richard Garnett, *A Hampstead Painter: The late Paul Falconer Poole, R.A. in the Hampstead Annual*, 1900.

Athenaeum: "a career not entirely unclouded, which began at Bristol . . . his quondam friend Danby". But, so far, the clues only add up to suggestion. Poole was only a boy of nineteen or twenty at the time. Danby was thirty-six or thirty-seven, and his wife must have been years older than Poole and was already the mother of seven children. I had inferred simply that Poole lived with Mrs. Danby, marrying her at last as an old woman, after Danby's death. But the inference was too simple. Danby declares in an autobiographical letter in the British Museum, that "in 1829 from some unhappy circumstances in my Family I left England." By July 28, 1830, when George Cumberland wrote from Bristol to his son, Poole had married—he had married "a Welsh lady from Crickhowel introduced t(o him by) Mr. Danby, they say." In August Cumberland wrote of Johnson, an artist friend of Danby's who had resettled in Bristol as a drawing master that he was "greatly grieved at Danby's conduct".¹ Professor H. W. Häusermann adds the next information from the papers of the *Chambre des Etrangers*, an administrative commission at Geneva which kept an eye upon aliens in the Canton. Danby came to Geneva in August, 1832. With him came his seven children, two illegitimate children, and "une concubine avec laquelle il cohabite"—named, a Welsh name, Helen Evans. In April 1836, after Helen Evans, then aged twenty-seven had born him a third child, Danby left Geneva, having come near, in his three and a half years' sojourn, to being expelled for debt.² It looks, indeed, like an exchange of wives. Everything was heaped upon Danby, perhaps with reason. Poole, as a boy, was allowed to grow out of his fault, if there was a fault. He was made an A.R.A. in 1846, some years after Danby returned from exile; and Danby lived just long enough to see, and no doubt without any pleasure, his quondam friend given the thing he had always been denied—full membership of the Academy.

IV

It is not easy to realize now, when for so long no generative, considerable painter has been, or needed to be, an R.A., what membership meant in early days, in standing and ability to earn. In Danby's life, at the time of Danby's election as an Associate, the Academy had a remarkable and an open-minded president in Sir Thomas Lawrence, a painter generous, and wide in

¹ Cumberland Papers, Add. MSS. British Museum.

² *Francis Danby à Genève* in *Alma Mater, Revue universitaire, Genève* (1947).

his generosity, towards the young. He had befriended Danby—and Constable—he had been enthusiastic about Géricault here in London as a young man of thirty. He had had Géricault invited to the Royal Academy dinner—at which one may pause and imagine to oneself Sir Alfred Munnings or his predecessors proposing such an invitation for a Picasso, a Klee, a Matisse, or a George Grosz.

To become an Academician meant lobbying and intrigue and a degree of crawling. Against his will Constable, who was so sharp about crawling in others, so caustic about those “high-minded” R.A.s, who preferred “the *shaggy posteriors* of a *Satyr* to the moral feeling of *Landscape*”, was compelled to do a little dignified crawling for himself, as one can see from his canvassing letter to Thomas Phillips, R.A.

I am now past the age of fifty, Mrs. Constable has most delicate health, and has seven infant children who have to look to me only for everything in this world.

I don't feel uncomfortable [which means, I do] while I am writing this sad letter to you, because I have long known you to be a man whose whole conduct is governed by the highest principles of probity and honour. And my object in writing to you at all is that I may be placed in your mind—fairly—in the list of my worthy brother candidates.¹

When Richard Redgrave, years later, was elected to full membership, he lurked in Trafalgar Square (the Academy was then in the National Gallery building), heard the news from one of his R.A. friends who slipped out in the dark, took a cab and rushed off with the news to his wife: he could not bear the smooth motion of the cab, he got out, he paid it off, and ran the rest of the way, no doubt clutching his top-hat.

So one may understand what Danby missed by the election of 1829, by the subsequent row and the mystery and the exile; and his hopes of a reconciliation cannot have been bettered by the death of Sir Thomas Lawrence. But, in spite of the Academy,² he did manage to re-establish himself. For a time, as we have seen, he was in Paris. Then came Geneva, yachting on the Lake—he was yachtsman, boat-builder and inventor as well as artist—and years of steady work, which included travel once more to Norway, and to Constantinople. There are paintings by him in Geneva, in private collections and in the

¹ *Art in England* 1821-1837, W. T. Whitley, 1930, p. 144.

² The Academy did send him £50, in 1831, “in consideration of the distressed state of himself and his family”, in Switzerland (*Hodgson & Eaton*, Royal Academy and Its Members, 1905).

Musée Rath. He came back in 1840, lived near London for a time, and then acquired a house a few yards from the sea at Exmouth, in a land and seascape of pink light reflected from the anchovy rocks, and of wide and shimmering effects. He exhibited, he built boats—one of his launching trenches is still a bunker on the Exmouth golf-course—he nursed his bitterness, and he became famous as one of the rebel artists outside the Academy. His painting had improved and solemnified. He still painted his fancy pieces, his wood nymphs hymning the sunrise, his Caius Mariuses among the ruins of Carthage, his enchanted castles, and Mary Magdalenes in the desert. He achieved a curious double reputation—a popular one with the merchant buyers of the North, and a cult reputation with the Preraphaelites. He had dropped violence, for shimmer and reflections upon water, and sunrise and sunset, calm, melancholy poeticizing based on a truthful observation and strengthened by formal arrangement. The fourteen-guinea picture—"Dead Calm, Sunset at the Bight of Exmouth"—has this careful arrangement, a train with a smoke trail moving out to the left, smoke curling out to the right, and in between an intricacy of horizontals and verticals, masts and spars, the square tower of a church, doubled and made more intricate by their reflections in the water. And this formality enforces the wide, melancholy, meditative impact of the picture.

The painting which many men regarded as his masterpiece I have never seen. It was the "Evening Gun, A Calm on the Shore of England", exhibited at the Academy in 1848, and at the Universal Exhibition in Paris in 1855, and then two years later at Manchester, in that section of the exhibition of the Art Treasures of the United Kingdom selected by the semi-Preraphaelite, Augustus Egg. It was a man-of-war firing an evening salute, under a sunset sky over a clear smooth sea. The most lyrical description of it is by Théophile Gautier:

Un chef-d'oeuvre, tout simplement . . . Le soleil se couche dans un amas de nuages gris entassés par bancs au bord de l'horizon, et dont les flocons rougissent comme des braises aux reflets de l'astre prêt à disparaître derrière la barre inflexible de la mer; par-dessus ces bandes de vapeurs, *And all that gorgeous company of clouds*,—un vers de lord Thurlow, que Byron se proposait d'emprunter un jour, —le ciel, dégagé et pur, passe par les transitions de l'aventurine, du citron pâle, de la turquoise au bleu froid et aux teintes violâtres de la nuit. La mer s'endort calme, unie, huileuse, illuminé de quelques rayons frisans. Entre le ciel et l'eau, un navire découpe sa silhouette sombre et ses agrès ténus comme des fils d'araignée. Sur

le flanc du navire, un tourbillon de fumée opaque, bleuâtre et lourde, traversé d'un éclair rouge, signale le coup de canon du soir. Le pavillon est amené.

On ne saurait imaginer l'effet poétique de cette scène: il y a dans cette toile une tranquillité, un silence, une solitude qui impressionnent vivement l'âme. Jamais la grandeur solennelle de l'Océan n'a été mieux rendue. (*Les Beaux-Arts En Europe*, 1855.)

Nathaniel Hawthorne saw the "Evening Gun" at Manchester, and bowed down before it.¹ Ford Madox Brown, antithetical as his practice may have been to Danby's, yet recognized Danby's solemnity and truth to nature. He many times referred to Danby; and in 1887, when Danby had been dead for twenty-six years and the Jubilee Exhibition was organized at Manchester, he wrote bitterly in the *Magazine of Art* on "The Progress of English Art as *not* shown at Manchester". Why was there no Martin? Why was there no Danby?

The works of Danby at that time, as I remember them forty years ago, enjoyed an immense reputation, and were credited with all sorts of qualities, while many people admired them in preference to Turner's pictures. I remember one in particular called "The Evening Gun", an English man-of-war in the tropics firing the salute to parting day—a most solemn and beautiful work. There was also about the same time a picture of his at the British Institution called "The Gates of the Seraglio", which represented the steps to the Seraglio at Constantinople as it appeared on the banks of the Bosphorus. The setting sun was ablaze in the windows, and behind the minarets was a round, full moon, rising as in defiance of the declining day, one of the most beautiful effects in all nature.²

Rossetti, and his friend, the artist and writer and acute interpreter, James Smetham, admired Danby, who must Smetham wrote, have watched on lonely hills, in silent vales, the last spark of great Day die out and the first rise ten thousand times before he could find the secret of that pathetic dream of nature which makes his work unique . . . To the believer in Danby all the persuasion and settlement is *there*—the data of the poetic—that dark pines cutting crimson horizons are poetic; that misty tarns with the purple evening departing from them are poetic; or that Danby's pines and Danby's tarns are so, if a hundred instances in which pines and tarns are not so in other men's pictures, or were not so in given circumstances in nature, were cited . . . Rossetti would grant me

¹ *English Notebooks of Nathaniel Hawthorne*, ed. Randall Stewart, 1941.

² *Magazine of Art*, 1888, pp. 122-4.

at once the whole question, because at a glance he *sees* the whole. Here is a man who does not, or will not. No matter, let us turn the conversation. But no; he has new questions about the nature and value of "authority". What if Rossetti agrees with you about Danby? Rossetti is not infallible, and Frith thinks Danby's pictures "miserable". "Rossetti? where are *his* pictures to be seen? Now Frith painted for the Queen and Royal Family, and is R.A."¹

It is true, Danby's pictures have not always lasted. To Madox Brown's complaint and his mention of the "Evening Gun" and the Gates of the Seraglio",—properly called the "Gate of the Harem"—the editor of the *Magazine of Art* added a defensive note "These works are said to be in a ruined condition." The brothers Redgrave remark that he seems "to have used some vehicle such as gold-size that has darkened with age, and in some cases caused the darks to crack". The very genuine drama of his "Upas Tree", moonlight and stars and rocks, waterfall, poison tree, poison seeker, and bones, as I have remarked, is now a wreck. Darkening, and the Frith taste of the later nineteenth century were added to the fact that Danby had been a "bad" man; and all have helped to drive him into oblivion. Disregarded pictures here and there, a mention in books of reference, a Danby Terrace in Exmouth, a grave in the churchyard of the ruined Devonshire church of St. John-in-the-Wilderness (very appropriate)—these are the present memorials of a painter who might have established himself as one of the most renowned men of the century, a painter, it must have been felt by those Preraphaelite admirers, who observed accurately, did not pick nature's pocket, and, at his best, ainted with imagination.

V

There is a bust of Danby, a marble bust in the National Gallery at Dublin, which shows a strong-chinned, vigorous, long face; clean shaven, with a suggestion of humour—humour and wilfulness combined. A good face. But I have not found any intimate description of Danby, or, in the difficulties of war-time, anything of his correspondence save for the few published scraps to his friend Petrie. In one letter he wrote "though the mind may be a diamond it will require a fresh setting if the body be as lead, and its very hardness and durability will help us destroy the setting". If Danby's mind was not sheer diamond, if he allowed himself much airy-fairiness, to be blown about much by fashion, to play his own tune and the public's tune, yet he was an artist who cut through his own extravagance, and

¹ *Letters of James Smetham*, 1902, p. 172. The date is 1866.

developed and matured to a grave finality. English art is strewn with geniuses up to twenty-five—too many of them, repetitive and mannered in their prime and through their days of honour, for us to neglect so able an executant as Danby. Moreover, towards artists we adopt a hard priggishness which we do not extend to writers. We forgive Shelley any amount of such airy-fairness as Danby (who was born the year after Shelley) allowed himself in paint, we forgive Dickens for a Little Nell, and for all kinds of too-muchness. Exactly because of such elements in painters, we refuse to see and admit their virtue. Bewitched by France, we can only see Constable, we can only snigger at the sentiments of a Mulready, a Wilkie, a Danby. We do not search for, or detect, the genuineness which is scattered through their work. We do not even admit to ourselves that, for example, Delacroix (see his comments on the 1855 exhibition in Paris) could find much to be admired in the English school, and not the earlier school of Reynolds; and making no such admission, we do not ask why Delacroix admired, and if there was any basis for admiring.

Our present attitude is uncritical, unhistorical, uninquisitive, as little dependent upon ourselves, and as dependent upon authority, as the attitude and acts of a row of Bond Street dealers nodding away for what they know to be safe and saleable. Exploration would bring pleasure and all the rewards of pleasure, and a better understanding of the good and the ridiculous, the genuine and the meretricious the solid and the fashionable, when we contemplate the rising and setting planets and the Milky Way of modernism. I have always held that the canon of English painting needs some stiff and sensitive revision; and Francis Danby is one man with whom such a revision might begin.

(In London the best paintings by Danby are in the Victoria and Albert Museum: "Disappointed Love", 1821, "Calypso grieving for her lost Lover", 1825, "Liensfiord Lake", 1841, and what is left of "The Upas Tree", 1820. "The Opening of the Sixth Seal", 1828, is in the National Gallery, at Dublin, but, like the bust, it is not exhibited. One can see a small oil painting, "The Last Gleam of Sunset", a portrait of Danby as an old man, sad, bearded and longhaired, by H. T. Munns, a few wild landscapes by O'Connor, and many watercolours by Petrie. The Bristol Art Gallery owns several Danby's, but none of much interest except the two early panel pictures, "Clifton Rocks from Rownham Field", and "Boy Fishing, Stapledon Glen". The Art Gallery at Wolverhampton owns "Athens by Moonlight"; there are two watercolours in the Oldham Art Gallery, and one in the Whitworth Art Gallery at Manchester. The Musée Rath at Geneva has three oil paintings, "The Baptism of Jesus", "Lake at Sunset", "The Baptism of Clorinda".

"The Fisherman's Home", 1846, is in the Tate Gallery, but was not on exhibition before the war. "The Gate of the Harem", 1845, is in the Royal Collection. Several of his drawings are in the British Museum).

7

HORSE-CHESTNUT TREES

ONE could measure "taste", and much more than taste, one could measure habits, activities, ways and ends of creation between 1760 and 1860, by marking, if one could make the method fine enough, when certain objects of nature began to force themselves into pictures and poems. Most of all, new objects of nature, new objects of that blue Mundane Shell and that Vegetative Earth which are the enemy and ally of art. For example, trees and plants, the numbers of which increased through the eighteenth century until in the nineteenth, from America, Australia, New Zealand, South Africa, from China, the introductions became each year a multitude; giving a new appearance, quickly and universally, even to small gardens, a new tinge to the words "flower garden".

In seeing how much objects were adopted, one must distinguish first between the ambitions of poetry. In *The Task*, William Cowper enumerated and described a number of garden shrubs:

Laburnum, rich
In streaming gold; syringa, iv'ry pure, etc.

But one would not find laburnum and syringa, shrubs familiar and cultivated since somewhere about 1596, inside the higher walled garden of a man's inner poetry, whether by a Cowper or any one else. It was too early perhaps even for the admission of lilac. Laburnum, yes, in art of description, poetry of description; but in the heart, with the universal rose—could one think of Blake replacing "rose" in *O Rose, thou art sick!* with anything out of the new (taking "new" as all that had arrived within 200 years of his birth), out of the new flora of gardens? And yet, even if Blake passed through, and out beyond, simplicities of vision, could one say that "rose" in this poem was a formality, a word without the substance of the natural object, that Blake had never seen, nosed, and felt the flower of which the poem was made?

O Rose, thou art sick!
The Invisible worm
That flies in the night,
In the howling storm,

Has found out *thy bed*
Of crimson joy,
 And his dark secret love
 Does thy life destroy.

Rose, lily, and sunflower are the flowers in *Songs of Experience*; and of these sunflower had already its existence in painting and in poems. Laburnums are not for Blake; the more ambitious the poetry, the more primal it is, the less eccentric, though not the less varied, are the images. One thinks of Blake's imperative that painting, music and poetry exist and exult in immortal thoughts, for which, as I say, roses and not laburnums.

The laburnum has never become more than a colour, an ornament, on the back of a lawn or on the edge of a poem. It has a sharpness of tint and, when not in flower, an ordinariness of growth which prevent much human emotion collecting around it. Far more successful, though long resisted, carrying far more emotion, is the horse-chestnut. Horse-chestnuts have had to combat a name suggestive of the inferior. Though they can be grown in England from their own seed, though they are hardy, they are still alien. And, liking them as we do, flower, leaf, fruit, solitary and along avenues, we feel them to be aliens; who have had no history, collected no fable, are contemptuously named, produce soft timber; and are recommended only by their own features. Introduced in the sixteenth century, horse-chestnuts were common through England before 1700. Big, branchy, quick growing, and with flowers, they were liked by gardeners and gentlemen; but to be liked is not to be an "object of beauty", is not to leave a gentleman's park, and be transplanted in the side, or central, walks of poetry, or across a frame into a picture. No-one could imagine Wilson, Reynolds, Gainsborough, Stubbs, or Smart, or Fuseli, or Blake having truck with a horse-chestnut.

Gilpin, who had sharp eyes with which he was early to detect the excellences of lichen and moss and the curling vitality of hops, could neither miss, nor miss out the horse-chestnut, when he came to "methodize" his picturesque observations upon trees in *Remarks on Forest Scenery*, which he published in 1791 (but had written some ten years before). In considering trees as single objects, he found the horse-chestnut (and it is often true) "a heavy, disagreeable tree". It was not fitted for pictures: "it forms its foliage generally in a round mass, with little appearance of those breaks, which we have so often admired, and which contribute to give airiness and lightness, at least a richness and variety, to the whole mass of foliage. This tree is

however, chiefly admired for its flower, which in itself is beautiful: but the whole tree together in flower, is a glaring object, totally"—he could not say more—"totally unharmonious and unpicturesque". Other comments echo or amplify Gilpin.¹ Here, for example, forty years on, in 1822, is Jacob Strutt, in *Sylva Britannica, or Portraits of Forest Trees*: "To the painter the magnificence of its stature, and the beauty of its broad, palmated leaves, and long pendent spikes of flowers"—why "pendent"?—scarcely atone for the exceeding regularity of its form, terminating, as it invariably does, when left to the hand of nature, in an exact parabola." The horse-chestnut is still an outsider, outside the frame. London in his *Arboretum*, in 1838, has to pass no aesthetic judgment on the tree, but his account is tinted with dislike; and it is instructive to read him on the scantiness of the horse-chestnut's "Poetical and Legendary Allusions". He finds a few French lines on horse-chestnuts in the Luxembourg; but the tree is not quite proper: "Some authors have compared it to an immense lustre or chandelier, its long racemes of flowers tapering up from its drooping foliage like lights. A Horse Chestnut tree, in full flower, has been called by Daines Barrington a giant's nosegay, and in the *Magazine of Natural History* Vol. IV, page 238, an eloquent description of this tree has been given by Mr. Dovaston, who compares its racemes of flowers to those of a gigantic hyacinth. Miss Kent, in the same work, Vol. III, page 135, calls it a Brobdingnagian lupine. . . . The manner in which it scatters its flowers on the grass, and the comparative uselessness of its fruit and timber, make it an excellent emblem of ostentation."

Already eyes which opened into more creative souls were seeing the horse-chestnut differently; and by 1856, for Ruskin, in the fourteenth chapter of his third volume of *Modern Painters*, the horse-chestnut has become, no longer "totally unharmonious and uncreative", but "one of the crowned and lovely trees of the earth" (just as he celebrated lichens, *rustici pauperrimi* to Linnaeus, as "the most honoured of the earth-children", with harmonies of colour "better than Titian's").

How does one explain this reversal? Enmity to the horse-chestnut had been partly due to association, partly to the fact that romanticism had needed no particular objects for picturing desires of the individual soul. Gilpin had found the sweet-chestnut—with justice, in a valid

¹ Archibald Alison, in his popular *Essays on the Nature and Principles of Taste* (1790), was kinder to the horse-chestnut. It was a "beautiful" tree: "The Character . . . of the weeping-willow, is melancholy, of the birch and of the aspen, gaiety: the character of the horse-chestnut, is solemnity, of the oak, majesty, of the yew, sadness." But Alison's "solemnity" was interfered with by the tree's lack of other associations.

comparison—"a noble tree". But then, he went on, the sweet-chestnut is "the tree which graces the landscape of Salvator Rosa". The sweet-chestnut had acquired a classical passport from literature, a sublime passport from painting; while the horse-chestnut had flowered away in obscurity, to the blind eyes of Moslems, in the mountains of Bulgaria and northern Greece. One forgets (it was his strength) how much a part Wordsworth was of the eighteenth century. He had eyes, he was not always writing the innermost poetry, he knew the horse-chestnut. But search through his poems: not a horse-chestnut will be found in one of them. It was neither wild, nor simple, nor authorized. Sweet-chestnuts there are in Wordsworth, plenty of them, authorized by their cultural history and their classical aura. They were acceptable for reference. In painting, in plates illustrative of the culture of trees, the horse-chestnut was described; but it is curious, it is a revelation of attitudes, to observe how unlike the horse-chestnut these descriptions in line very often were. Strutt may talk of its flowers, and its broad, palmated leaves; but his etching of the horse-chestnut has no form of leaf or flower, no character of the tree: it cannot be accepted as a horse-chestnut at all, to our post-Preraphaelite eyes. I have not seen John Martin's horse-chestnut in his rare *Characters of Trees* (1817); but I should be surprised (remembering also Wilkie's comment on his inability to paint a great toe from the life) if it were much nearer reality than the *Arboretum* plate by George Lewis, an artist more cleanly and closely responsive to natural objects; and Lewis's plate is no more a horse-chestnut than Strutt's. I know of a recognizable horse-chestnut—just recognizable—in a conversation picture by Arthur Devis, just as there are Lombardy poplars in garden-pieces painted before 1800. But that cannot really be called leaving the garden or the park.

For poets and painters born within the eighteenth century, one can, in fact, stigmatize this Brobdingnagian lupin as, lacking in ideality, lacking in associations, too regular in mass and too decided in detail; a foreign body, unconnected with Druids, ruins, the Middle Ages, or the passions (wherein it differed from the exotic Upas); a mere gardener's ornament.¹

Who, then, were the first painters and poets who admired the horse-chestnut, who reversed Gilpin's contempt, and prepared for Ruskin's "one of the crowned and lovely trees of the earth"? So

¹ And at that, one which had been planted, too much planted in the Versailles manner in avenues and straight lines. "It seems to have been as much the fashion of the present century to destroy avenues as it was in the last to plant them"—Humphry Repton, in *Sketches and Hints on Landscape Gardening*, 1794. The straight line, as Repton says, was out of fashion in the new dedication to nature.

far as I know, Samuel Palmer, John Clare and Tennyson. What might be called the first pure horse-chestnut drawing I believe to be Samuel Palmer's pastoral in sepia, "The Skirts of a Wood", which he designed when he was twenty, in 1825; the artist, as so often happens, preceding the poet in the appropriation of new materials. This 1825 horse-chestnut is remarkable, because the design is actually based upon one of Blake's drawings for Dante. Blake's only tree, almost (other than his semi-Upas Tree, his "accursèd tree of mystery") was an oak, symbolizing Albion's deep-rooted and stubborn errors, the errors of mankind within their Mundane Shell; and Palmer's landscape agreed with Blake in seeking the spirit through the forms of matter, if not beyond them. Palmer obeyed Fuseli, and had a horror of "the last branch of uninteresting subjects, that kind of landscape which is entirely occupied with the tame delineation of a given spot". "We tread," in Palmer's landscape, "on classic or romantic ground, or wander through the characteristic groups of rich congenial objects." Yet when Palmer was twenty, when he was most under the magic of Fuseli and Blake, he drew his sheep and his piping shepherd under a horse-chestnut tree, under the alien without associations, *because* there were horse-chestnut trees, there, actually before his eyes at Shoreham, because he was free enough to feel, with few but Alison to support him, that horse-chestnuts were solemn. And his horse-chestnut is a real horse-chestnut: it lives, it is formalized with chestnut-fans as precisely "of seven leaves, the middle-largest, diminishing towards the stalk, so that those nearest the stalk are smallest", as in Gerard Hopkins's *Platonic Dialogue on the Origin of Beauty*, some forty years on. There are at least two other early Palmers in which the horse-chestnut is a main object: and in one of them, "A Hilly Scene", the chestnuts are forced into congruence with Palmer's, and the age's, mediaevalism, are formed into a Gothic arch around the picture, involving a crescent moon their leaves and erect blossoms; and the chestnuts rise out of the oldest and most respectable symbol of fertility, from heavy, golden-eared corn, a field of orient wheat. These designs mark a divide between association and the ideal, one way, and the object as the true thing in nature, the other way—whether the object is Holman Hunt's scapegoat in the chemicals of the Dead Sea, or Elizabeth Siddal in the bath as Ophelia. It is the divide between romance as the expression of self, and that fidelity to nature witlessly represented by Ruskin in his order to landscape painters, that they must learn geology.

Clare, an older man by a good many years than either Palmer or Tennyson, often refers to the horse-chestnut, though not with the

passion that he keeps for the flaming of celandine or primrose or the white sheets of hawthorn. The trees are there, but association still keeps them from being too forward. Tennyson's horse-chestnuts are not in so remarkable a setting as Palmer's, but they are more particular than Clare's, and there are plenty of them. There is no ideal, and Palmer's shepherd or shepherdess has given way to a miller's daughter:

. . . . Those three Chestnuts near, that hung
In masses thick with milky cones.
(*The Miller's Daughter*, 1833)

And although horse-chestnuts were foreign bodies, although they did not get to England till the end of the sixteenth century, yet they could, with Tennyson, in 1842, spread round the dearest mediaeval inhabitants of English romance:

And drooping Chestnut buds began
To spread into the perfect fan.
(*Sir Launcelot and Queen Guinevere*).

Palmer saw the whole tree, Tennyson, one of the painters in words peculiar to the nineteenth century, typically saw the parts and the details, like an investigating lens.¹

With Ruskin to come along—less an originator, than one who put already felt things into prose order—it meant that at last the picture frame and the painter's eye, and the poet's, were getting wide open to the tree; and perhaps closing to many of the adjuncts of the deepest, inmost art. For the Preraphaelite horse-chestnut is something literal, for a literal art, an art of pathos rather than immortality; an ornament, for art, as it was and had been for the garden. There are Preraphaelite chestnuts everywhere, in known, in less known work—for instance, in Coventry Patmore's *Angel in the House*, on a Sunday morning, before going to church:

In sleep the matrimonial dove
Was crooning; no wind waked the wood,
Nor moved the midnight river-damps,
Nor thrill'd the poplar; quiet stood
The chestnut with its thousand lamps—

in A. B. Houghton's finely organized drawings engraved on the wood for *Home Thoughts and Home Scenes* (1865), or in H. A. Bowler's sententious pathetic painting of "The Doubt (can These Dry Bones

¹ See p. 117.

Live)", exhibited in 1855, in which a young woman leans on a tombstone looking down at a skull (on which a blue butterfly has perched) and the remnants of a skeleton, while the palmate leaves of the chestnut catch the light above and round her head. These mid-nineteenth century years of accuracy were the years in which the scientist could no longer trust the mere artist to delineate forms and in which Henry Bradbury devised accordingly his method of the nature-printing of ferns and sea-weeds, which "represents not only the general form . . . with absolute accuracy, but also the veins, and the nature of the surface,—the hairs, and other minutiae of superficial structure by which they are known"¹—the years soon of ornament and pattern and design, the thinnest of art, of Burne Jones, the Art Workers' Guild, and denial of growth and spirit. Look at such a book as *Art Studies from Nature, as applied to Design* (1872), in which naturalists and scientists co-operate to make a moral use in design of Lords-and-Ladies, snow-crystals, sea-weeds, and fossils. Look for the end, for the dim and thin finale, in book cover designs by Sturge Moore, chestnuts in flower on a 1911 tram poster enticing one to Hampton Court; or in A. E. Housman's unreal, unfelt chestnut lighting its flambeaux.

So do the ways of seeing, realizing, and using one, single object change within a hundred and fifty years.

¹ Preface to the Quarto edition, *Nature-Printed Ferns*, 1859.

8

THE PRERAPHAELITE MYTH

ARE we to limit Preraphaelitism to the Preraphaelites, to the actual members, that is, of the P.R.B.; and if we do, can we say that there was such a thing as a *Preraphaelite Tragedy*, the name which Mr. William Gaunt has given to the latest book on this area of English art?¹ Was there in the Preraphaelites a great power of talent, tragically—a flabby and vulgar adverb—tragically frittered away through weakness before circumstance and before strength of social development? Did they make a “revolution”, and then betray it? Are there Preraphaelite master-paintings, or only the seedlings of such a master-art, arrested and etiolated?

Or were those original Preraphaelites men of a remarkable and talented self-importance, who managed to surround themselves, for posterity, with a set of gigantic magnifying-glasses? What would happen if we took a frank, and honest, and intimate look over the rim, over those lenses of self-esteem? What would happen if we set the Preraphaelites, with their contemporaries, and their fellow travellers, all in a natural and undistorted and impartial focus, if we took an inclusive view?

None of these questions can be answered easily. To be certain in one's answers, one would need to be able to estimate English painting between, say, the 1848 of Millais' *Lorenzo and Isabella*, and the 1860 of Dyce's *Pegwell Bay*. One would need to be sure about the painting attached to certain names—Dyce, for one, Augustus Leopold Egg, for another; and John Brett, and James Smetham, and Richard Burchett, and W. L. Windus, and John Lewis, and R. B. Martineau. To be certain would mean years of penetration into private houses, into provincial galleries, and into a hazy and hardly documented past. Distracting the investigator at each cautious pace is the “glittering magnifying-glass” of the P.R.B.; warning one off are those massive volumes—Holman Hunt's autobiography, *Pre-Raphaelitism and the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood*, *The Life and Letters* of Sir John Millais, and the many chronicles edited by William Michael Rossetti—in which the P. R. brethren, or their next-of-kin, cried their own goods, and their own good ideals; and then behind these loud-speakers, endlessly stream lesser voices, pro and con. of which the latest is the

¹ *The Preraphaelite Tragedy*, 1942.

voice of Mr. Gaunt. The effect of all this noise is to induce belief that mid-nineteenth century art in England was the P.R.B., was, in definition even more defined, Holman Hunt and Sir John Millais, with the uncertain allegiance of Dante Gabriel Rossetti. On the fringe, Ford Madox Brown; but Brown, Holman Hunt was careful to say, was never invited to belong. And not only, is it to be inferred from their books, was all English art of significance their art; but they, the Preraphaelites, invented it. There was no descent, no tree, there were no visible parents, there was not even an act of artificial insemination: there was simply an invention, almost *in vacuo*. Respect for predecessors, but not very detailed respect, is about as much ancestorship as Preraphaelite chroniclers allow. The critical point is, really, what the Preraphaelites thought, and said, about Nature. Here are some texts:

“A child-like reversion from existing schools to Nature herself.”

“Our original doctrine of child-like submission to Nature.”
(Holman Hunt).

“The Pre-Raphaelites had but one idea—to present on canvas what they saw in Nature.”

(Sir John Millais).

“Millais said that he had thoughts of painting a hedge (as a subject) to the closest point of imitation, with a bird’s nest—a thing which has never been attempted. Another subject he has in his eye is a river-sparrow’s nest, built, as he says they are, between the reeds; the bird he describes as with its head always on one side, ‘a body like a ball, and thin legs like needles’.”

(*P.R.B. Journal*, kept by W.M. Rossetti,
May 23, 1849).

Even Rossetti—“even” because Rossetti and Nature in this detail were never very closely acquainted—even Rossetti, in prefacing *The Germ*, wrote that: “The endeavour held in view throughout the writings on art will be to encourage and enforce an entire adherence to the simplicity of nature.”

There is no doubt that this attention to nature they held to be one of their peculiar virtues, and one of their peculiar discoveries. And they are still being given credit in their own valuation. Yet before the P.R.B. was ever formed, nature had had a long, slowly changing history in English art; something of which I have tried to trace in this book in earlier essays. Concurrently there had been the develop-

ment of the two attitudes towards nature, the attitude of seeing through it, and by means of it, towards the divine, and the attitude of expressing one's own feelings by projecting them into nature. Constable is a convenient man to consider, midway between Blake and the P.R.B. Nature certainly reflects back to him his own feelings. He is a shade nearer to the naturalism of the reed warbler's nest than to religious naturalism, that naturalism fostered in many English romantic painters and poets by among other things, the mystical writings of Jakob Boehme. Everything on earth could be admired by a mystical naturalist as the shadow of its original in Paradise. Yet even the commonsense Constable, preferring "drawing" to "inspiration", was not, in his own way, unaffected by that mysticism. When Constable tells a woman he had never seen an ugly thing in his life—that there was nothing ugly in nature—he is rationalizing that mystical view of the beauty of things terrestrial. He finds a new reason. Things can never be ugly, he says, because . . . "let the form of an object be what it may, light and shade and perspective will always make it beautiful". Or take something else in Constable: take his love of the sparkle and dewy freshness of nature. It is Constable's version of the sparkle, the glitter, which may begin inside the grotto of the mind of Alexander Pope, but which became the earth gleam foreshadowing the gleam of Paradise—the glitter possessed by eighteenth century religious poets such as Smart and Cowper; to which is certainly related the sparkle on a silk dress by Gainsborough or the shimmer of colours in many canvasses by Reynolds. Constable's Paradise is an earthly one within the bounds of Constable himself. When those French critics in 1824 called Constable's pictures mere nothings, melodious nothings like the sound the wind draws from the Harp of Aeolus, Constable was pleased. He hadn't any thought (any more than his French critics had any thought) of Aeolian Harp music imaging the music of Paradise; or of being more by this time than just the voice of nature, which is what Constable believed his pictures to be. The nature was, in fact, nature created by the mind of Constable. But that was no matter. And the process now visible with the P.R.B.—and not, of course, only visible in art—was the isolation of nature both from the self and the divine. That was the nature to which the P.R.B. made their original child-like submission, nature which now begins to need a capital N. And from this submission to Nature, goodness is now isolated as morality. Worship slips into submission, and submission involves a moral and rather witless belief in "scientific" accuracy in reproducing nature. Mystery, too, separates from the determinate mystery of God into a

belief, also rather witless, in truth to mystery. What happens now to the emotive colour of Blake, or Gainsborough, or Reynolds? Rubens must now be reproved for not seeing a rainbow in spectroscopic accuracy, and not painting it right; and a nonentity must be praised for succeeding with rainbows where Rubens failed. The scientific colour interests of Goethe had made him compile his *Theory of Colours*: now you get his book (which Turner found himself reading in his old age) translated for artists by an artist—Sir Charles Eastlake. Now artists are to be found “wishing to substitute simple imitation for scenic effectiveness, and purity of natural colour for scholastic depth of tone”. (Ford Madox Brown). Now purple comes into pictures because it is the purple of sunset true to natural facts (I should like to know three dates—the date of the first painting of purple heather on Dartmoor, the date of the first purple altar-cloths, the date of the first purple aubretia and fat purple rhododendron). Now come the hot, hard colours of the copper bowl in which the Peter of Ford Madox Brown washes the feet of Christ, and the disgrace of his turnips which “were all false in colour”, and the fire-light in *Waiting* which was too red for the old dealer. Now rhapsodists and painters and poets are less imaginative than Sir Humphrey Davy, the scientist, had been, when some thirty years before he watched the glittering particles of potassium breaking through the potash crust in an act of birth; the scientist who watched the moon above an abbey sailing through the dark blue sky and felt such a sympathy with nature that he “would have felt pain in tearing a leaf from one of the trees”. Now Ruskin writes grandly of light upon Swiss glaciers, but turns round through all his long—yes, his long purple passage, and asks: “Did Claude give this?” And now the Preraphaelites are born, and think themselves altogether independent of the movement of the age, of all other artists who had seen nature about Bayswater and Hampstead and in Wales. If they discovered anything new about nature, or discovered a new nature, it was to their discredit, except in so far that they were victims of their time.

The Preraphaelites make, by the way, some interesting small slips of ingenuous admission. Did no one welcome their attentiveness upon nature? In 1851 Millais casually, we are told by Holman Hunt, meets John Lewis, back after seven years in Egypt, and finding the only hope of English art in the Preraphaelite “reform”. Lewis to Millais: “I am sure that oil painting could be made more delicate than either of you make it; not sufficient pains are taken to make the surface absolutely level.” Who else welcomed the paintings of the Brotherhood? Other “naturalists” of an older and better attitude to

nature—old Mulready, and Linnell. Who else was attentive to Nature? Ruskin: "I have bought the third volume of *Modern Painters*, and mean to read it with the slowness, iteration, and thought which it deserves. I have glanced at the chapter on 'Finish', and I see the exquisite definition of it: 'added fact'. How clear, how true! Finish, from first to last—added fact. How this leads to the great principle, *study nature*." (James Smetham). But princes of the Pre-raphaelite blood carefully say, *Ruskin didn't think of it first*; which was true, but they also were not first. Who else insisted upon finish and workmanship? Coventry Patmore, who attended P.R.B. meetings, and insisted "strongly on the necessity of never leaving a poem till the whole of it be brought to a pitch of excellence perfectly satisfactory". (*P.R.B. Journal*, 7th November, 1849). Who sent Holman Hunt and Rossetti to see the brilliant colours and "Godlike completeness" of the Memlings at Bruges, and also the Van Eycks, paintings which have more to do with Pre-raphaelite peculiarities than any Italian painters before Raphael? Augustus Egg; who also backed them, and found a purchaser for Hunt's *Rienzi*. Who else went to such an un-Italian source of finish and minuteness? Their semi-Pre-raphaelite friend, Ford Madox Brown, who found no better way of leading himself to simple imitation and pure natural colour "than to paint what I called a *Holbein of the nineteenth century*".

The Brethren, these very English Victorian brethren, illustrate, too, the big hold of morality and the separation of morality and emotion. William Michael Rossetti and Holman Hunt both, after the event, become uneasy about any unqualified identification of the P.R.B. with truth to Nature:

"I will . . . take it upon me to say that the bond of union among the members of the Brotherhood was really and simply this—1. To have genuine ideas to express; 2. To study Nature attentively, so as to know how to express them; 3. To sympathize with what is direct and serious and heartfelt in previous art, to the exclusion of what is conventional and self-parading and learned by rote; and 4, and most indispensable of all, to produce thoroughly good pictures and statues." (William Michael Rossetti).

Holman Hunt lets us into the odd story of Millais doing a bit of nature, and then, upon Hunt's criticism, searching hard for a moral idea to tack the nature on to. The nature, to begin with, was a piece of illustration: "Two lovers whispering by a garden wall", from Tennyson's *Circumstance*. For Hunt two lovers were not enough: "I should have liked you to be engaged on a picture with the *dramatis*

personae actuated by generous thought of a larger world." Millais saw designs for *The Light of the World*, coupled with drawings of a subject from the War of the Roses, in which a Red Rose lady is being persuaded by a White Rose lover to flee with him; but "she is to be represented as hesitating between love and duty". And so Millais comes to *The Huguenots*; the simple lovers change into lovers to be separated by religion and his first idea was "two priests holding up the crucifix to the Huguenot, whose sweetheart likewise adds her persuasions".

Also a priest on either side of the lovers "holding up one of the great candles of the Roman Catholic Church, and the Protestant waving them back with a gesture of disapproval". But, in the end, "the artist wisely trusted to the simplicity of the pathos".

This story is worth retelling because it illustrates the Preraphaelite weakness of grafting idea and moral aim on to illumination. "I am nightly working my brains for a subject. Some incident to illustrate patience I have a desire to paint." (Millais to his patron, Mrs. Combe, 1851). Millais, in the same year, wrote to the same correspondent of "turning the minds of men to good reflections and so heightening the profession as one of unworldly usefulness to mankind". He went on: "*This is our great object in painting, for the thought of simply pleasing the senses would drive us to other pursuits requiring less of that unceasing attention so necessary to the completion of a perfect work.*" There—plain moral self-delusion; self-delusion, to be kind, and not humbug. For what works by Millais have for us still, a moving, immediate power? *Lorenzo and Isabella*, or *The Carpenter's Shop*? No. *Ophelia* or *The Blind Girl*? No. But the early painting of the grandfather and child; and then, I think, mainly the amazing sharp toed, thin waisted, sharp breasted drawings—the so-called "Preraphaelite Drawing" for *Apple Blossoms*, of 1850; the drawing of the *Lovers by the Wall* (1851); the design for *Romeo and Juliet* (1852); and the amazing series of 1853, the year in which Millais fell in love with Ruskin's wife. There they are, *The Dying Man*, *The Race Meeting*, *The Blind Man*, *The Romans Leaving Britain* the kissing angels in the psychopathic *Design for a Gothic Window, Rejected*; and above all the sexual excitement and realism and sharp loveliness of its companion piece, *Accepted*, the man on his knees, the moulded arms, the profile, the breast coming from the frock, all lighted from the drawing-room, where, beyond the lawn-roller, the men in tails prance with women in full skirts. Then comes the wedding, after Ruskin's marriage is declared null; and then, passion satisfied, the inane descent towards *Bubbles* and £46,000 a year. *That*

the Preraphaelites valued moral and spiritual ideas as an important section of the ideas germane to fine art is most true, and not one of them was in the least inclined to do any work of a gross, lascivious, or sensual description. (William Michael Rossetti).

Holman Hunt would be worth wondering about, historically at least; but he strikes me as the most self-inflated, self-magnified of all the Preraphaelites. Sensuality gave Millais a short use for all his gifts, turned for a time the emptiness of nature observation into something real, erotic and captivating. Hunt had, to my eye, no such gifts, and ran painfully through a fire-mist of religion (Coventry Patmore's term for comparing the religious verse of Herbert's time with nineteenth century hymns), stretching out with his religious butterfly net, stretching valiantly out after ideas of religious banality. To his credit are a few landscapes and drawings.

Ford Madox Brown—he was of the time, not of the Brotherhood. He, indeed, felt the language of form in *Pretty Baa Lambs*, *Walton on the Naze*, *An English Autumn Afternoon*, in *Take Your Son, Sir*, and *The Last of England*. He, indeed, did something to overcome his faithfulness to the colours of nature by his other qualities of vision. His drawings are scarcely those often delicious flashes of illumination which were not produced alone among the Preraphaelites by Millais, those ill-fated seedlings which grew up so seldom into pictures; and Brown, as well, hunts after the idea, the moral notion. Could anyone translate *Work* without his gloss: "... the couple on horseback in the middle distance consists of a gentleman, still young, and his daughter... This gentleman, is evidently very rich, probably a colonel in the army, with a seat in Parliament, and fifteen thousand a year and a pack of hounds... he looks to me an honest, truehearted gentleman (he was painted from one I know) and could he only be got to hear what the two sages in the corner have to say, I have no doubt he would be easily won over. But the road is blocked, and the daughter says, we must go back, papa, round the other way." Holman Hunt's *Light of the World* needs a little interpreting as well. The crown of the universe is interwoven into the crown of thorns "which has become fair and blossoming". The robe is seamless and purest. The regal mantle is "exquisitely embroidered with millions of jewels, i.e. His people", clasped by the Jewish Urim and Thummin on one side, on the other by a jewelled ornament "typical of the Gentile world, both being united by a cross". The Lamp symbolizes the Word, the patterns of its seven sides are "emblematical of the diversities of opinions" among Christians, who "are after all united

in one glorious head"; the light inside is "of exactly the same intensity as the halo of glory" round Christ's head, i.e. "its source is unmistakably indicated"; its beams fall on the door, which is the sinner's heart (hemlock, nightshade, hinges and nails red with rust). A bat "emblem of ignorance, aroused by the unusual sound" [of the knock] "and the dazzling light, at last quits its shelter beneath the dark lintel, for it can find no more rest there".

Could anyone, without Madox Brown's note, contrive or trouble, from the physical paint, to work out his acrostic of brawny labour and the torn-up road separating the rich man and his child from the figures of Carlyle and F. D. Maurice, the brain workers? Could anyone, without instruction, contrive or trouble to work out Holman Hunt's iconography? Brown shared the taste Holman Hunt ascribed to the near Preraphaelite, Walter Deverell—"the prevailing taste among the young of that day, which Carlyle had inaugurated and Charles Kingsley had accentuated, of dwelling on the miseries of the poor, the friendless and the fallen". This leaning touched them all. But dwelling on the miseries and giving charity partake of the inane of natural observation as an end, of application to the detail, and not vision into the cause. In 1847, the high year of the P.R.B., Herman Melville's *Redburn* was published; and there, and in nothing written and painted even in the sensual moments of a Victorian moralist, is vision, through the dockside slums of Liverpool, where Melville saw the corpse of the sailor still and stark in the deadhouse, and saw—every man his own headstone—the name and the date of his birth tattooed upon his arm. Melville saw into London, in the opulent restaurant of variegated marbles, with the proprietor, florid and white-haired, "like an almond tree in blossom", in his rich mahogany cage; the restaurant which "echoed to the tread, as if all the Paris catacombs were underneath"—the sound "sighing with a subterraneous despair, through all the magnificent spectacle around me; mocking it, where most it glared". Who can imagine a Preraphaelite saying "The Godhead is broken like bread. We are the pieces", imagine a Preraphaelite "who against the proud Gods and commodores of this earth, ever stands forth his inexorable self"? They were mostly compromisers and cowards, concealing their materialism in a mist of pseudo-spiritual morality, scared of looking at their own souls in sulphur-light.

But Rossetti? I have kept him to last. For Rossetti is the man true to mystery. He is not inanely true to nature. His Brethren tried to plant him among the leaves. Millais: "Last year when I went to Knoke, I prevailed upon him to come and paint a landscape back-

ground. I hoped the study this would give him would purify his conception of conventionalism, but in a few days he proved how little patience he had for any teaching but that seasoned by previous custom." Millais: "His drawings were always remarkably interesting, but I wanted to see in them a freshness, the sign of enjoyment of Nature direct, instead of quaintness derived from the works of past men." And read also Ruskin's prim, wine-dealing, well-dressed, well-to-do patron's letters about going down to Wales to do a little drawing from nature,—that correspondence which began "if I were to find funds, would you be ready on Wednesday morning to take a run into Wales, and make me a sketch of some rocks in the bed of a stream, with trees above, mountain ashes, and so on, scarlet in autumn tints"?—and which ended "Dear Rossetti, You are a *very* odd creature, that's a fact. I said I would find funds for you to go into Wales to draw something I wanted. I never said I would for you to go to Paris . . ." (*Ruskin-Rossetti-Preraphaelitism*, ed. W. M. Rossetti, 1899).

Rossetti was not true, either, to morality. The early religious Rossetti is not himself. His brother indeed declared that his early sonnet on *St. Luke the Painter* was a correct index to him:

. . . but soon having wist
How sky-breadth and field-silence and this day
Are symbols also in some deeper way,
She looked through these to God and was God's priest.

Some unspecified deeper way; and God is another name for mystery. Ford Madox Ford, in his excellent small book on Rossetti (that and his book in the same series, *The Preraphaelite Brotherhood*, surpass everything else on the matter), gave as his index the sonnet *Dantis Tenebrae*:

Accepting me to be of those that haunt
The vale of magical dark mysteries . . .

That was more truthful. And Rossetti was much the most frank about the things—the magic and the mysteries—that he admired. Here are some of them, as a reminder: The mysterious Bible illustrations of Isaac Taylor (well worth looking up, but the British Museum set is incomplete); John Martin; Blake (the *Mystery* and the *Emotive Colour*, that was enough); the work, not so easy to see, of von Holst, a late follower of Fuseli, and a cross, according to Bell Scott, between Fuseli and Retsch (some subjects by von Holst:—

Two Students Gazing at the Clock of Eternity; Sir Reginald Front de Boeuf ordering the Saracen slaves of the Templar to seize and throw on the flames the Jew, Isaac of York; Satan and the Virgin Mary dancing on the Edge of the World); Danby (admired also by Brown and Smetham), that poet-artist who as we have seen, admired nature but held the mind to be a diamond in the lead setting of the body, which it helped to destroy by "its very hardness and durability". In Paris (1849-50), Rossetti admired Delacroix (Holman Hunt did not), and Géricault's *Shipwreck*. Holman Hunt says that Rossetti despised science—"what could it matter, he said, whether the earth moved round the sun or the sun circled about the earth, and in the question of the antiquity of man and his origin he refused to be interested".

There is the man. "Quaintness derived from the works of past men"—well, Millais was not far from exactitude. Rossetti earns more sympathy and more respect than Hunt or Millais. Mystery, however mysterious, induces a better understanding of how a picture is made than *watching* nature or chasing morals. "Your work," Rossetti wrote to James Smetham, "is of the kind that I really enjoy, because you have always an idea at the heart of it." Not on the fringe of it. But sift him through, sift Rossetti's designs, sift his poems; and the few which do not pass through like coloured dust are those in which his mystery and derived quaintness have, after all, caught a touch of his unwilling attentiveness to nature. Poems: his fragment on the merciless woman with eyes in her breasts, *The Woodspurge*, and a few others. Drawings: a few such as *Design for a Ballad*, drawings of his wife, designs for the Moxon *Tennyson*, and Tennyson himself reading *Maud*. Rossetti is in some ways the last twitter of Allingham's Aeolian Harp, the Aeolian Harp poems in that first book which the Preraphaelites illustrated:

What saith the river to the rushes grey,
 Rushes sadly bending,
 River slowly wending?
 Who can tell the whisper'd things they say?
 Youth, and prime, and life, and time,
 For ever, ever fled away.

Drop your wither'd garlands in the stream,
 Low autumnal branches,
 Round the skiff that launches,
 Wavering downward through the land of dream.
 Ever, ever fled away!
 This the burden, this the theme.

A wonderful man to know; but not to remember, and with more books to his memory than he deserves.

Mr. William Gaunt, to revert to the magnifying glasses round the P.R.B., has only shifted the point from which he looks through those glasses. The P.R.'s are a "tragedy"—the big flabby word—the tragedy, he maintains, of the whole period, idealists against materialism; but he would have written a more valuable, if less smart, less library-circulating book, if he had weighed the ideals and the expression more critically, if he didn't assure us that in 1843 (by which time our Romanticism was dead) "The Romantics of literature and architecture had begun their protest against the formal and classic culture of which the Royal Academy was the off-shoot."

One last consideration. What about other men of the forties and fifties, what about the inclusive view? For no artists in England have trumpets ever been so loudly sounded on this side as for the major Preraphaelites. For no other artists have letters been so well preserved, stories so thoroughly collected, lives so lengthily compiled. But only for the major Preraphaelites. What was the real stature of Collins, Deverell, Arthur Hughes, Martineau? They are cautious and stingy with facts. Can an estimate be made of Windus and Brett, Egg—how many pictures by the major Brethren surpass the drawing and design of Egg's series in the Tate of "Past and Present"? Can we be sure about Dyce, and Egle, and Henry Wallis, who painted the apt and symbolic "Death of Chatterton"? How is it that Henry Wallis has been given no entry even, in the latest supplement of the *Dictionary of National Biography*? (For the curious, to set beside *The Death of Chatterton*, here is a piece of Henry Wallis's prose, from the days of his later connoisseurship, describing a Persian star-tile: "When regarded in a certain light, in which the shine of the glaze is not perceptible, the lustre pigment appears of a delicate fawn or raw-siena tint, admirably harmonizing with the blue and green. Alter the angle of vision ever so slightly, and the lustre flashes forth in amethyst and ruby, sapphire and emerald, so as to appear almost alive. The only substance to which it may be compared is the Labrador fespilpar familiarly known as Pavement of Paradise, wherein seems to be reflected all the gorgeous effulgence of an oriental sunset. The lustre effect is nothing less than magical, and witnessing this startling transformation one is not surprised at the Persian belief in magic.")

How is it that James Smetham is only a name, in spite of lavish praise of his pictures by Ruskin and Rossetti and Madox Brown, a

name supported only by a book of letters, a book of his essays, and a Methodist pamphlet in red paper covers? Smetham deserves consideration all on his own. From seeing his etchings and some of his paintings still in his family, he must, I know, be enjoyed some time or another as an imaginative artist who surpasses almost all of his time in England.

Who knows anything of Godfrey Sykes (1825-1866), beyond his architectural decorations for the Victoria and Albert Museum and his cover of the *Cornhill Magazine*, anything of his Sheffield workshop interiors?

How is it that we accept the P.R.B. silence and contempt and their dismissal of the Cyclographic Club? Burchett was a member. His lovely landscape of a cornfield by the sea, in the Victoria and Albert Museum, entirely proves that we should know more of his work. How do these things happen? One reason is that skilful organization of the memory of the P.R.B.—that magnifying glass technique; another is, that writer after writer has been too unadventurous or too lazy to follow the clues littered about in the P.R.B. volumes. Here, as everywhere in English art, there are conventional valuations to be rejected, pictures to be unearthed, letters and papers to be saved, books to be published, exhibitions to be arranged. Here is a country of conjectural lines, like a globe in 1550, to be explored by a new generation of art historians, for geographical and real and negative treasures. Mr. Gaunt's book is like a mediaeval bestiary compiled from the best sources; but it is about the last Preraphaelite *compilation* that can be accepted in patience.

9

WILLIAM BARNES, 1800-1886

I

RECOLLECTIONS we have of William Barnes are mainly of him as a middle-aged, old or dying man. Many of them are in the *Life* written by his daughter, Lucy Baxter,—a book, so few were those who admired Barnes, which sold only 267 copies. William Allingham, Locker Lampson, Coventry Patmore, above all, and later on Edmund Gosse and Thomas Hardy all knew him; and his poems were read and felt and criticized by Patmore's friend, Gerard Hopkins.

Gosse and Hardy went to see him not long before his death: "We found him in bed in his study, his face turned to the window, where the light came streaming in through flowering plants, his brown books on all sides of him save one, the wall behind him being hung with old green tapestry. He had a scarlet bedgown on, a kind of soft biretta of dark red wool on his head, from which his long white hair escaped on to the pillow; his grey beard, grown very long, upon his breast; his complexion, which you recollect ("you" is Coventry Patmore) as richly bronzed, has become blanched by keeping indoors, and is now waxily white where it is not waxily pink; the blue eyes, half shut, restless under languid lids . . . I wish I could paint for you the strange effect of this old, old man, lying in cardinal scarlet in his white bed . . ."¹

Then, in the autumn, on 11th October, 1886, there shot a flash from the sun on Barnes's coffin to Thomas Hardy watching his funeral (the funeral of the man who taught him the forms of poetry):

Thus a farewell to me he signalled on his grave-way
As with a wave of his hand²

Gosse's description of Barnes, in scarlet, against white, shows him on his death-bed in one of those clear contrasts of colour which

¹ "An English Classic, William Barnes", by Coventry Patmore, *Fortnightly Review*, Nov. 1886. Palgrave also describes him, a year before his death, his "finely cut face", his "hands fine like a girl's", adding "Titian or Tintoret had no nobler, no more highborn looking sitter among the doges of Venice." From his diary, in *Francis Turner Palgrave*, by Gwennllan Palgrave, 1899, p. 185.

² "The Last Signal: A Memory of William Barnes" in *Collected Poems*, 1923, p. 444.

inform Barnes's poems from the very first up to the end. But before I discuss the way he saw, the way he felt, and the way he wrote—and there is a disciplinary good to be had from Barnes as well as a great pleasure—I would like to swing back from his documented decline to the little documented and less explored years in which he was formed.

II

“ . . . I, the son of John and Grace Barnes, was born at Rush-hay, a farmling at Bagber in the Parish of Sturminster Newton in the Vale of Blackmore”—and from there on, it is true, we know the skeleton of his life—a Dame school, a period in the offices of a Sturminster and a Dorchester lawyer, learning of Latin and Greek and Italian, early poems, running a school of his own at Mere, study of French and Persian, marriage to a girl of considerable beauty and good sense, wood-engraving—“I had from a love of Art, tried my graver on wood, quickened moreover by Bewick's works, and it was a day-dream of my youth that I might follow Art as my way of life”—the shift to another school at Dorchester where he was “so lucky, as to have . . . a friend who was a good Oriental scholar, Col. Besant, theretofore of the native Bengal Infantry, and author of the Persian and Urdu Letterwriter, with whom for some years I read a little Hindustani or Persian once almost every week”. He kept his diary in Italian, and early on he visited Wales, explored Welsh poetry, and prosody, long in advance of Hopkins, “For the sake of British History and the old Bardic school of poetry, I have felt it well worth while to learn something of Welsh, for it seems to me that for a man to study the early British history of our land without Welsh is, as it were, to dig the earth with a sharp stick, instead of a spade, and I have been so lucky as to have Welsh friends who could read Welsh to me.”¹ He had a liking for archaeology. He had a turn for mechanical invention, and instrument making, and mathematics, and helped Major-General Shrapnel with some of his mathematical calculations for artillery. He was a musician, singing, playing several instruments, and composing; in fact, through all his pursuits, as in his poetry, goes a passion for form and order and reason. There is an excellent formality about his wood engravings, and all through his life he felt the desire for visual order within a frame. When he was twenty-one,

¹ All these quotations are from a copy of Barnes's MS., “Notes on the Life of William Barnes”, in possession of the Barnes family. There is some doubt as to whether Barnes was born in 1800 or 1801, though he was christened early in 1801. Thomas Hardy believed it to have been in 1800.

he went so far in his wish to be a professional engraver and artist that approaches were made for him to Rudolph Ackermann in London, but the replies of Ackermann and the engraver Edward Scriven were discouraging.¹ He remained an amateur, and a picture collector, owning work by Richard Wilson, Etty, Bewick, John Baverstock Knight, Westall, Danby, and others.

III

In all his early life—and it would not be easy to calculate how much of a handicap this was—Barnes had no friend or acquaintance of his own stature. He knew, and was helped by older men with some scholarship and ability, but he had no contact at all with any other considerable poet until he reached early middle-age. He was not aggressive, and beyond the approach to Ackermann, never seems to have had a thought of coming nearer to London than Mere, or of introducing himself to any other writer. He liked Dorset and Wiltshire, he liked scything, he liked his wife, his children and his pursuits. “ ‘Mr. Barnes,’ his wife would say, ‘you are burying your talents in this poor out-of-the-way place.’ ” He had a “marked shyness of demeanour, an awkwardness in his gait and mien, and a certain amount of indifference to his personal appearance”. He was “morbidly modest”. And “so uniformly mild were his manners and language that he was often suspected of being deficient in determination and spirit; a suspicion which in reality had no very solid justification; but Barnes was such a decided advocate of peace at any price that he would never, except when driven by sheer necessity, enter any arena as a probable disputant”. He kept good discipline in his school, never used the cane, and always wore (in the class-room) “a long, light-blue, rough-faced, flannel-textured dressing-gown” (somewhere, if it still exists, there is a painting of Barnes as a young man in his dressing-gown). In his twenties, he was an odd, prematurely baldheaded scholar and schoolmaster.

These notes about young Barnes were written by one of his pupils,² who added that he was “nearly isolated” socially, and was looked down upon in Mere, and in Dorchester as well. He had his few friends; but whether “nearly isolated” is an exaggeration or not, it is certain that all his richest years of creation were passed in a loneliness of spirit and intellect. Barnes, like his neighbours, was unaware of

¹ *The late Rev. William Barnes as Engraver*, Vere L. Oliver, F.S.A., Dorset Natural History and Antiquarian Field Club Proceedings, 1925.

² C. J. Wallis, “Early Manhood of William Barnes the Dorset Poet”, in the *Gentleman's Magazine*, July, 1888.

the comparative standing of his own genius, and the world was unaware of it until Coventry Patmore began to review him and praise him when he was nearly sixty. And then the world quickly returned to its old indifference.

"He is of no school but that of nature", wrote Patmore, which is true, so long as you do not interpret it to mean that he was a naïve, or unlearned writer. "Mr. Barnes, in his poems, is nothing but a poet. He does not there protest against anything in religion, politics, or the arrangements of society; nor has he the advantage of being able to demand the admiration of the sympathizing public on the score that he is a chimney-sweep, or a rat-catcher, and has never learned to read."¹ But for all his meticulous, highly professional knowledge of writing, and his rare gift of sustaining his sensibility and skill, all through life, Barnes was so fulfilled (except in a worldly sense: he had plenty of troubles before he settled down into being a parson) that I doubt if he ever quite looked upon himself as a "poet" in our conscious European way. He was much more like a plant, which does not exist for its flowers.² Such a lack of vanity and ambition coupled with so much expert skill may be unique. If he had moved among men of letters, he might have gained much, but he might equally have stained the clear run of his talent. Landor might have companioned him well, and invigorated him, but who else? He was narrowed by Dorset, but Dorset, for all its indifference, kept him safe, like Clare in his asylum.

IV

His first book was *Poetical Pieces*, printed for him in Dorchester in 1820—ten poems in ordinary English. He was then twenty years old, and there is nothing much to mark in these conventional album verses but their neatness, and the fact that he began to write in normal English, and for many years continued to do so. *Orra: A Lapland Tale*, Dorchester-printed in 1822, is worth more. It stands to his later writing like *Gebir* to the rest of Landor, or *Midnight* to Crabbe, or *A Vision of The Mermaids* to the rest of Hopkins, and it came partly out of his reading of Joseph Acerbi's *Travels Through Sweden, Finland, and Lapland to the North Cape*, a travel book published twenty years before, and partly from eighteenth-century visions

¹ William Barnes, the Dorsetshire Poet", in *Macmillan's Magazine*, vol. VI., 1862.

² "W. Barnes left no list of his poems, and rarely talked of them . . . he seems to have written when the inspiration was upon him, and, having written, he was satisfied." His son, Rev. W. Miles Barnes, in the introduction to *Poems in the Dorset Dialect*, 1906, p. 2.

of the frozen sea. The title-page text comes from Dryden's version of the *Georgics*:

There as they say perpetual night is found
In silence brooding on th' unhappy ground.

And the subject is Orra's search for her lover, a night she spends in a frozen cave, where her boat breaks away, so that the answer (undescribed) must be death. Barnes's unending love of clear, contrasting colour is now put down for the first time:

Her bosom seemed, beneath her long black hair,
Like snowy hills beneath the clouds of night—

As graceful as the silvery cloud
That glides upon the summer air—

And softly now her snowy eyelids close,
Weighed down by slumber, o'er bright blue eyes—

There are three seedlings which develop in his later poetry. In *A Vision of the Mermaids* Hopkins's way of making a detailed jewellery out of his observation already shows itself lusciously and thick. In Barnes's *Orra*, you see already how carefully he is going to select, and how sparsely, and so how brightly, he is going to use colours for emotion.

Out of its order—because it is almost as little known—it will be as well to look inside the last of his early books in ordinary English, *Poems Partly of Rural Life*, published in 1846 in London. The sonnets, and probably many of the other poems in this book, were written much earlier—most of the sonnets in 1830 (when he also wrote sonnets in Italian). Barnes's poems never develop an emotional, or rather a psychological, subtlety. When—as often—they are exceedingly sure and moving, simple, elemental feelings are made to pull at our hearts by an intricate subtlety of rhythm and pattern. That subtlety he had not made perfect by 1830, so that the simplicity of statement stands out a bit too much. Yet I do not see why so classical and serene a poem as his fifth sonnet, *Leaves*, should remain obscure:

Leaves of the summer, lovely summer's pride,
Sweet is the shade below your silent tree,
Whether in waving copses, where ye hide
My roamings, or in fields that let me see
The open sky; and whether ye may be
Around the low-stemm'd oak, robust and wide;
Or taper ash upon the mountain side;
Or lowland elm; your shade is sweet to me.

WILLIAM BARNES , 1800 - 1886
Whether ye wave above the early flow'rs
In lively green; or whether, rustling sere,
Ye fly on playful winds, around my feet,
In dying autumn; lovely are your bow'rs,
Ye dying children of the year;
Holy the silence of your calm retreat.

And other poems to be remarked in this book are *A Winter Night*, *Rustic Childhood*, *The Lane*, and *Burncombe Hollow*. Two stanzas from *Rustic Childhood* will show Barnes's eye for light and for objects. Many nineteenth-century poets observed exquisitely, but not many could order this observation so well as Barnes, and space it out with such an infallible effect:

. . . Or in the grassy drove by ranks
Of white-stemm'd ashes, or by banks
Of narrow lanes, in-winding round
The hedgy sides of shelving ground;
Where low-shot light struck in to end
Again at some cool-shaded bend,
Where we might see through darkleav'd boughs
The evening light on green hill-brows.
I knew you young, and love you now,
O shining grass, and shady bough.

Or on the hillock where I lay
At rest on some bright holyday;
When short noon-shadows lay below
The thorn in blossom white as snow;
And warm air bent the glist'ning tops
Or bushes in the lowland copse,
Before the blue hills swelling high
And far against the southern sky.
I knew you young, and love you now,
O shining grass, and shady bough.

The same qualities, not yet finally intensified and refined, you can read in "The Lane":

I love the narrow lane's dark bows,
When summer glows or winter blows;
Or when the hedge-born primrose hides
Its head upon the drybanksides
By ribby-rinded maple shoots,
Or round the dark-stemm'd hazel's roots;

THE HARP OF AEOLUS

Where weather-beaten ivy winds
Unwith'ring o'er the elm's brown rinds
And where the ashes white bough whips
The whistling air with coal-black tips;
And where the grassy ground, beside
The gravel-washing brook, lies wide . . .
And wither'd leaves, too wet to ride
The winds, line ev'ry ditches side . . .

I find very little forced or awkward about "The Lane", and I have normalized the italic letters of the original, which Barnes put in to show how the poem was written on the alliterative principles of Old English poetry—again an anticipation by many years of Hopkins's concern with Old English. (Barnes had much else to import into the nineteenth century, out of the wide reaches of his scholarship and his curiosity.)

V

Barnes's poems in normal English up to, and after this 1846 volume, are more numerous and more accomplished than is realized, but in the Dorset dialect he certainly did come to the top of his classical perfection. Thomas Hardy had quoted from Barnes's statement that he wrote in dialect because he could not help it: "To write in what some may seem a fast out-wearing speech form, may seem as idle as writing one's name in the snow of a spring day. I cannot help it. It is my mother tongue, and is to my mind the only true speech of the life that I draw."¹ That always struck me as rather a puzzling statement. It is true that, having spoken in dialect as a child, for some time he probably kept a Dorset accent (as Coleridge kept something of a Devonshire accent). As a man, he could no doubt slip from English into Dorset English (he preached his sermons in Dorset); but his first promptings were to write poems in plain English, which he did until he was thirty-four, and continued to do, at intervals, all through his life. And after 1867, for his last nineteen years, he reverted to English and wrote only one poem in dialect.² In other words he could perfectly well help it, and often did. Had Barnes made a statement which was obviously untrue? In his fragment of his own life he wrote a little differently: "As to my Dorset Poems and others, I wrote them so to say, as if I could not well help

¹ Preface to *Select Poems of William Barnes*, 1908, p. viii. For the full statement see preface to *Poems of Rural Life in the Dorset Dialect, Third Collection*, 1862, p. iii.

² Introduction by Rev. W. Miles Barnes, to *Poems in the Dorset Dialect*, 1906.

it, the writing of them was not work but like the playing of music, the refreshment of the mind from care or irksomeness."¹

And others—that is to say, it was a general statement about all his poems, and perhaps a deliberate qualifying of his earlier statement that he could not help it—as if he felt that, if nearly true, it was not quite true enough.

Writing in dialect began as a preference, a choice which Barnes made out of his philological delvings. His daughter confirms that in her *Life* of William Barnes and says "when he began, it was as much the spirit of the philologist as the poet which moved him". And she quotes his statement that "the Dorset dialect is a broad and bold shape of the English language, as the Doric was of the Greek. It is rich in humour, strong in raillery and hyperbole; and altogether as fit a vehicle of rustic feeling and thought, as the Doric is found in the *Idyllia* of Theocritus";² and elsewhere, several years after his first Dorset poems were written, but several years before the first book of them came out, he affirmed that Dorset dialect was "purer and more regular than that which has been adopted as the national speech".³ So, far from being a spontaneous act, this choice of dialect was a learned perversity, which he was able to carry through, since dialect had been his first speech, without the defects of being perverse. Once he began, he found he could do it by nature. Then, no doubt, he could not help continuing.

What I mean will be clarified by thinking of Doughty, who set out to revitalize English by reviving, with an early dictionary always alongside his writing hand, the dead, unspoken English of the sixteenth century. Doughty is unreadable, Barnes is a delight. Barnes is genuine, Doughty a monster, and perverse, with all the defects of perversity.

And as a prolegomenon to the Dorset poems it is worth referring also to Hopkins's letters. Hopkins had already admired Barnes for a good many years when Coventry Patmore sent him three volumes in 1885, and he had some sharp words with Bridges (who admired Doughty) over Bridges' "contemptuous opinion" of Barnes—"the supposed emotions of peasants". "I hold your contemptuous opinion an unhappy mistake: he is a perfect artist and of a most spontaneous inspiration; it is as if Dorset life and Dorset landscape had taken flesh and tongue in the man";⁴ and writing earlier to Bridges, he makes a

¹ "Notes on the Life of William Barnes", by himself. MS. transcript in possession of the Barnes family.

² *Life*, p. 84.

³ *Gentleman's Magazine*, January 1840, p. 31.

⁴ *The Letters of Gerard Manley Hopkins to Robert Bridges*, ed. C. C. Abbott, 1935, p. 221. The date of the letter is Sept. 1st, 1885.

THE HARP OF AEOLUS

comparison, the rightness of which I will not argue about, between Barnes and Robert Burns. Burns, he says, does not translate: take away the Scotchness and something ordinary remains, but Barnes does translate, and without a great loss.¹ And that at least is true: a lack of knowledge of the euphony of Dorset dialect does not, to my ear, make it impossible to enjoy Barnes's poems clearly and intensely. There are two lines I keep among the furniture of memory, and keep in this form:

The cuckoo over white-waved seas
Do come to sing in thy green trees.

Barnes wrote:

The gookoo over white-weāv'd seas
Do come to zing in thy green trees.

The translation I make, more or less without meaning to, is much nearer Barnes's writing than, shall I say, Barnes's, or anyone else's reading of the Idyls of Theocritus was ever near to the original sound of Theocritus; and though I have no suspicion that Barnes ever wrote any of his Dorset poems first in ordinary English—in the English he habitually used in his reading, in his letters, and, I suppose, in his thoughts, the English versions that he did make of some of the Dorset poems are no less lively and authentic. The English version of *The Mother's Dream*, for instance, is not less good than the Dorset original.²

VI

There is a remark in Llewellyn Powys's letters that Barnes never writes about the sea. That is nearly, if not quite, true. He had no taste for the sea, one of many facts which mark him off from other poets and painters and writers of his time—Darley, Tennyson, Swinburne, Patmore, Courbet, Melville, Emily Brontë, for example. And there is a deeper explanation for it than a land-locked childhood, and Barnes's intense cultivation of his inland, rural imagery. He had no use for the swell and turbulence and endless width of the sea—for its lack of form. He is not a poet for expansive mystery, or for

¹ *Ibid.*, p. 87, 14th August, 1879.

² The Dorset original of "The Mother's Dream" is in *Poems in the Dorset Dialect* 1906. The Rev. W. Miles Barnes explains in the introduction that many of the poems in *Poems of Rural Life in Common English* (1868) were translations from the Dorset.

crossing the bar, for the infinite in any way.¹ He does not feel lost, or overwhelmed, or bound to fight against a universal ocean. He accepts, and does not interrogate, the universe. And his form, and his observation, are two things I want to explain. However narrow Barnes may have been, form and observation are qualities in his verse that we can profit by. He was not a fragmentary poet, or a Samuel Palmer with eight or nine years of lyrical vision and explosion. Lyrics such as *White an' Blue*, with its airy vitality and youthfulness, were written when Barnes was nearly seventy years old. And often it is not easy, so much are his poems conceived or carried out as a unit, to isolate a stanza or an image for admiration. Coventry Patmore well remarked "often there is not a single line worth remembering in what is, nevertheless, upon the whole a very memorable poem".² The poems are rhythmically united, and tied together still more tightly by refrains. When I was putting together my anthology *The Romantics*—this will illustrate the unity I am talking of—I ended Barnes's poem *The Sky A-clearen* at a point where I could bring out the pictorial exquisiteness of the third stanza—one of his colour-contrasts:

The drevèn scud that auvercast
 The zummer sky is all a-past,
 An' softer âir, a-blowèn droo
 The quiv'ren boughs, da shiake the vew
 Laste ràin draps off the leaves lik' dew;
 An' piaviers now a-gettèn dry,
 Da steam below the zunny sky
 That's now so vast a-clearèn.

The shiades that wer a-lost below
 The starmy cloud, agen da show
 Ther mockèn shiapes below the light;
 An' house-walls be a-lookèn white,
 An' vo'ke da stir oonce muore in zight,
 An' busy birds upon the wing
 Da whiver roun' the boughs an' zing,
 To zee the sky a-clearèn.

¹ Tennyson—it is typical of the nineteenth century—writes of death as crossing the bar and putting out to sea. The eighteenth-century attitude is to sail calmly or contemplate storm from the quiet of the harbour, e.g. Matthew Greene:

I make (may heav'n propitious send
 Such wind and weather to the end)
 Neither becalm'd, not over-blown,
 Life's voyage to the world unknown. (*The Spleen*)

² "William Barnes, the Dorsetshire Poet", *Macmillan's Magazine*, vol. VI, 1862, p. 156.

THE HARP OF AEOLUS

Below the hill's an ash; below
 The ash, white elder-flow'rs da blow;
 Below the elder is a bed
 O' robinhoods o' blushin' red;
 An' there, wi' nunches all a-spread,
 The hây-miakers, wi' each a cup
 O' drink, da smile to zee hold up
 The râin, an' sky a-clearèn . . .

It was just possible to do it—to make the mutilation, and let it stand—but I felt the poem, like that, seemed to bleed. Its form, like a statue with an arm broken above the elbow, foretold the rest. The rest, it is true, is touched—this is Barnes's Victorian, pathetic vice—with a weak sentiment, even if the remaining stanzas are demanded by the broken pattern:

. . . Mid blushèn mǎidens wi' their zong
 Still draw their white-stemm'd reäkes among
 The long-back'd weäles an' new meäde pooks,
 By brown-stemm'd trees an' cloty brooks;
 But have noo call to spweil their looks
 By work, that God could never meäke
 Their weaker han's to underteäke,
 Though skies mid be a-cleärèn.
 'Tis wrong vor women's han's to clips
 The zull an' reap-hook, speädes an' whips;
 An men abroad, should leäve, by right,
 Their bit o' vier up at night
 An' hang upon the hedge to dry
 Their snow-white linen, when the sky
 In winter is a-clearèn.

But what mutilation would be possible at all in a later poem such as *My Love's Guardian Angel*, where the refrain is worked up to the emotional weight of its last use?

As in the cool-äir'd road I come by,
 —in the night,
 Under the moon-climb'd height o' the sky,
 —in the night,
 There by the lime's broad lim's I did stäy,
 While in the äir dark sheädes were at pläy
 Up on the windor-glass, that did keep
 Lew vrom the wind my true-love asleep,
 —in the night.

WILLIAM BARNES, 1800-1886

While in the grey-wall'd height o' the tow'r,
—in the night,
Sounded the midnight bell wi' the hour,
—in the night,
There come a bright-heär'd angel that shed
Light vrom her white robe's zilvery thread,
Wi' her vore-vinger held up to meäke
Silence around lest sleepers mid weäke,
—in the night.

"Oh! then," I whisper'd, "do I behold
—in the night,
Linda, my true-love, here in the cwold,
—in the night?"
"No", she did answer, "you do misteäke:
She is asleep, 'tis I be aweäke,
I be her angel brightly a-drest
Watchèn her slumber while she do rest,
—in the night."

Zee how the clear win's, brisk in the bough,
—in the night,
While they do pass, don't smite on her brow,
—in the night;
Zee how the cloud-sheädes näiseless do zweep
Over the house-top where she's asleep.
You, too, goo on, though times mid bé near,
When you, wi' me, mid speäk to her ear
—in the night.

VII

Barnes's Italian journals I have not been able to see, but he seldom put down any more detail about the poems he was engaged on than a laconic "scrivendo versi" or "versi scritti",¹ so it would not be possible from them to date either their evolution or his complicated experiments in form. *Poems of Rural Life in the Dorset Dialect*, his third book of poems, was published in 1844, when he was already in his forties. Much of the contents must be earlier than that: he had written his first dialect poem, "The 'Lotments", I think, ten years

¹ *Poems in the Dorset Dialect*, 1906. Introduction, p. 3.

before when he was recovering from an illness.¹ And here I may give the names of all his later collections. Few libraries have his poems complete. *Orra* is not in the British Museum. The recent *Cambridge Bibliography of English Literature* doubts if there is a copy, though two exist, as well as the manuscript, in the Museum at Dorchester. After the first Dorset collection of 1844 and the English poems of 1846, came in 1859 *Hwomely Rhymes*; in 1863 *Poems in the Dorset Dialect*; *Third Collection*; in 1868 *Poems of Rural Life in Common English*; in 1870 *A Selection from Unpublished Poems*, published by Winterbourne Monkton school; and in 1906, posthumously, *Poems in the Dorset Dialect*, printed by the *Dorset County Chronicle*. Several of his best poems are in this last rare pamphlet, which the British Museum lacks, as it lacks *Orra* and the pamphlet of 1870.

Through all these books, all these poems, he steadily keeps up his sheer skill, with much variation in form. Hardy noticed that "on some occasions he would allow art to overpower spontaneity, and to cripple inspiration";² but he allows that rarely enough, and his art is so fine and certain that he seldom seems monotonous through mannered repetition, or overworking, of successful effects. If I read Clare's poems, so deficient was Clare in this cultivated strength of Barnes, I find myself overfed with the visionary substance of poetry, which has simply been put down in the readiest, easiest and most obvious jog-trot form. Barnes was less completely *in* the world of nature than Clare. He does not achieve Clare's absolute hits,—he is not a seer—but he does not come down to Clare's dribble of absolute misses.

Form to him was fitness: he wrote several things about it, and he explored as well the origin and simplest nature of poetry. "Matters most interesting to me are those belonging to man, in his life of body mind and soul, so in his speech, manners, laws and works."³ As for man, "the natural man is unfallen man, as he was finished by the hand of God, when He saw all that He had made to be very good".⁴ And whatever fallen man may be, "the beautiful in nature is the unmarred result of God's first creative or forming will . . . the beautiful in art is the result of an un mistaken working in man in accordance with the beautiful in nature".⁵ He maintained "there is

¹ "1834 I wrote the first of my *Poems of Rural Life in the Dorset Dialect* . . . The first Dorset Idyl was written in my room when I was uphalenung from a sickness, an ailing of the liver." MS. Scrapbook in Dorchester Museum.

² *Select Poems of William Barnes*, 1908. Preface, p. ix.

³ Transcript of MS. "Notes on the Life of William Barnes", by himself, in possession of the Barnes family.

⁴ Review: "Patmore's Poems", in *Fraser's Magazine*, July, 1863, p. 130.

⁵ "Thoughts on Beauty and Art", *Macmillan's Magazine*, vol. IV, May-Oct 1861, p. 126.

no high aim but the beautiful. Follow nature: work to her truth".¹ But "the beautiful is also the good by reason of a fitness or harmony which it possesses".² He admired "the beauty and truth of colour and action in the Dutch school; and"—since he is anything but Dutch—"the harmony, tone, and effect of colour, even with bad drawing, and, in some cases, it may be with a want of depth, in a work of Turner".³ In all the beautiful things of a landscape, he discovered fitness—"fitness of water to irrigate growth, and to run for all lips to the sea; fitness of land to take and send onward the stream; fitness of strength to weight, as of the stem to the head of a tree; fitness of elasticity to force, as that of the poplar, and the bough whose very name is bending, and the bullrush and grass to the wind; fitness of protection to life, as in the armed holly and thorn, and the bush, or ditch-guarded epilobium; and a harmony of the whole with the good of man".⁴

Harmony was a favourite word, and harmonic proportion a favourite topic, with Barnes. He wanted harmonic proportion in churches—"that too little understood and wonderfully neglected principle of harmony in form as well as in sound"⁵ ought to be applied, so he maintained, to the relative heights of the tower the, nave and the chancel. He framed his pictures and bound his books in harmonic proportion. He held that poetry must keep in with the fitness of nature and must conform to the nature of speech and the natural cause of poetry among men. "Speech was shapen of the breath-sounds of speakers, for the ear of hearers, and not from speech-tokens (letters) in books",⁶ and discovering what he could about the origins of poetry from books of travel and philology and his own study of European and Oriental literature, he believed that poetry did not spring from cultivation or refinement, but from elemental necessity: "there has never been a full-shaped tongue that has sounded from the lips of generations of any tribe without the voice of song; and . . . to a bookless and unwriting people verse is rather a need than a joy".⁷ It is curious to find him down in his Dorset isolation writing that "the measures of song . . . may themselves be measured, not only by the steps of the dramatic dance, but by the steps of a march, or by the strokes of oars, as in the Tonga songs of the kind called Towālo or paddle songs, which Mariner says are never accompanied with instrumental music, but which are short

¹ *Ibid.*, p. 126.² *Ibid.*, p. 128.³ *Ibid.*, p. 137.⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 133.⁵ Letter on harmonic proportion as applied to churches in *Gentleman's Magazine*, December, 1843.⁶ From the "Fore-say" in *An Outline of English Speech-Craft*, 1878.⁷ "The Old Bardic Poetry", *Macmillan's Magazine*, vol. XVI, 1867, p. 306.

songs sung in canoes while paddling, the strokes of the paddles being coincident with the cadence of the tune".¹

In English poetry, his own practice was based on the Enlightenment; and no doubt he owed that salutary basis, in part, to being out of the swim, to being brought up in a countryside where the eighteenth century was still alive in the nineteenth; and to associating early with old-fashioned men for whom the Augustans were more important, still, than Wordsworth, or Keats, or Shelley. Such is the viable advantage of not always being modern, or up to date. He was little touched with an Elizabethan or a Miltonic romanticism, much as he studied the structure and prosody of Milton and the Elizabethans. Spontaneity, singing because you must, "like the playing of music, the refreshment of the mind from care or irksomeness"—yes. But he read Dryden and Pope, and he quoted Mrs. Cooper on Waller's poetry, that Waller "rode the Pegasus of wit with the curb of good manners".² It would be interesting to know when he first read and absorbed the Earl of Mulgrave's *Essay Upon Poetry*, with its emphatic praise of Homer and its emphasis on "exact *Propriety* of Words and Thought" in the writing of songs:

Expression easie, and the *Fancy* high,
Yet *that* not seem to *creep*, nor *this* to *fly*;
No Words transpir'd, but in such *order* all,
As, tho' by Care, may seem by Chance to *fall*.

Mulgrave, said Barnes, "writes to fancy or genius

. . . I am fain

To check thy course, and use the needful rein.

Without *judgement*, fancy is but mad", he quoted, and went on, "A Welsh bardic canon says: the three qualifications of poetry are endowment of *genius*, *judgement* from experience, and *happiness of mind*."³ Paraphrasing Mulgrave, he liked lines which are written "with a skill that conceals skill", that "keep all the strait rules of verse, yet flow as freely as if they were wholly untied". Then, "we cannot but feel that kind of pleasure which is afforded by the easy doing of a high feat, besides that which is afforded by good writing".⁴

After all that, neither the complexity of his lyric dodges and

¹ "On the Credibility of Old Song, History and Tradition", *Fraser's Magazine*, September, 1863.

² "Plagiarism and Coincidence", *Macmillan's Magazine*, vol. XV, November, 1886, p. 77.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 77.

⁴ "The Old Bardic Poetry", *Macmillan's Magazine*, vol. XVI, 1867, p. 307.

formalities, nor his care (how different from much in Tennyson) to pick over his observation and select from it, and never or seldom to overcrowd, continue to be surprising, however rare they are in other men's poetry between 1830 and 1870.

To analyse Barnes's skill exactly, one would need some degree of his own knowledge of Italian, of Persian (Petrarch and Sa'di were his favourites) and of Welsh, and other languages as well. On his eighteenth-century basis of "exact propriety of word and thought" he heightened his verse in every way he could, by setting himself tasks of every kind. There are clues to this heightening, and to his mind, in the elaborate exemplification of rhyme in his *Philological Grammar* (1854), a book which he "formed from a comparison of more than sixty languages". He sympathizes with all rhyming tasks which can be alloyed into the structure of a poem. "A poet may impose upon himself any task,—as that he will introduce some forechosen word into every distich or line, or exclude it from his poem; or that every line shall end with a noun; or that his poem shall take a chosen form to the sight; or he may bind himself to work out any unusual fancy." He mentions George Herbert's poems in the form of wings or an altar, reproves Addison for calling Milton's matching of words of the same root "poor and trifling", as in

That brought into this world a world of woe
Which tempted our attempt.

"However poor and trifling this figure might have seemed to Addison, it is sometimes very striking, as shown in the spontaneous language of mental emotion", and he gives other examples of this root-matching, "called by the Persians . . . derivation", from Virgil, Sophocles, Crabbe, Tennyson, Cowper, Coleridge, George Herbert, Shakespeare and other Elizabethans. Other poets of his age had taken from Elizabethans only an attitude, or fairy nothings (compare much of Darley or Hood), or insubstantial horrors. Barnes looked at the way they wrote, their word-repetitions, their collocation of two words alike in sound, unlike in meaning, their acrostics, their elaborate alliterations, and so on, which are paralleled by the elaborations and conventions of the Persian mediaeval poetry he so much enjoyed. The Persian poets and the Elizabethan lyric writers (and, for that matter the English poets of the Enlightenment whom Barnes learned from first of all) concerned themselves more with virtuosity of language than with originality of ideas. Beside the Augustan uniformity of common sense and a commonly held stock of knowledge, one could place the statement of the Arab historian, Ibn

Khaldún, that "the Art of Discourse, whether in verse or prose, lies only in words, not in ideas . . . ideas are common to all, and are at the disposal of every understanding, to employ as it will, needing no art".¹ That certainly was how Barnes thought of poetry, elaborate in art, simple in ideas, and straightforward in effect. And he transfers much of the elaboration that he discusses to his own verse—for example, from Eastern poetry the "kind of word rhyming, or word-matching" called *adorning*, "in which every word of a line is answered by another of the same measure and rhyme in the other line of the distich":

As trees be bright
Wi' bees in flight.²

The Persians, he says, use an ornamental punning or "full-matching . . ." a full likeness in sound, of words which differ in meaning. He used it in *The Wold Wall*:

Ah! well-a-dae! O wall adieu.

He used the peculiar parallelism of Hebrew poetry—the principle of "Tell it not in Gath, publish it not in the streets of Askalon"—in *Melhill Feast*, for example:

The road she had come by then was soon
The one of my paths that best I knew,
By glittering gossamer and dew,
Evening by evening, moon by moon—

or in the uncollected *Troubles of the Day*:

As there, along the elmy hedge, I go
By banksides white with parsley—parsley-bloom.

Welsh and Irish poetry were sources for him. For instance, in Irish poetry "there is a kind of under-rhyme, or rhyme called *union*, which is the under-rhyming or rhyming of the last word or breath-sound in one line, with one in the middle of the following one". Here it is in *Times o' Year*:

Here did swäy the eltrot *flow'rs*
When the *hours* o' night wer vew,
An' the zun, wi' eärly *beams*
Brighten'd *streams*, an' dried the dew . . .

But his most pronounced Celtic borrowing is the *cynganedd*, the Welsh repetition of consonantal sounds in the two parts of a line,

¹ Quoted by E. G. Browne: *A Literary History of Persia*, vol. II, 1906, p. 85.

² This and the few subsequent quotations are from Barnes's *Philological Grammar* (1854).

divided by a caesura, which is better known in English through its use by Gerard Hopkins. The familiar instance comes as a refrain in the poem so celebrated through its musical setting. *My Orcha'd in Linden Lea*, in which the apple tree

Do leän down low in Linden Lea,

where the *cynganedd* consonants are DLNDNL/NLNDNL; but there are plenty more, such as "In our abode in Arby Wood", or "An' love to roost, where they can live at rest".

Hopkins was made a bit uneasy about this particular borrowing. Barnes he wrote "comes, like Homer and all poets of native epic, provided with epithets, images, and so on which seem to have been tested and digested for a long while in their native air and to have a *keeping* which nothing else could give; but in fact they are rather all of his own finding and first throwing off".¹ This he thought "very high praise" and he found his rhythms "charming and characteristic", as they are, certainly. But his use of *cynganedd* he did not think successful. "To tell the truth, I think I could do that better" and he added that it was "an artificial thing and not much in his line".² I believe Hopkins was half true, and half-wrong in not realizing how much Barnes's line was at once conscious and unconscious art—half-true, because although Barnes's most perfect poems are sometimes elaborate tasks, they are usually ones influenced by his borrowings from world prosody, but not embodying them pure and direct.

Barnes's soul was not lit by sulphur, he did not, like Melville, measure himself against fate or walk on the sea-bottom, "left bare by faith's receding wave", or wrestle with God, or hang, as Hopkins hung, desperately, on the dreadful cliffs of the mind; he may, as Hopkins agreed with Bridges in saying, have "lacked fire" (though that is not always so, in my judgment), but he *knew* and felt as much about the function in human life, the origins, nature, and adornment, of lyrical poetry, and its form, as any poet who has written in English. To paraphrase a valuable remark of Auden's, he disciplined himself and proved the power of his creative impulses by accepting the limitations of form. He created a system of poetry for his own use.

VIII

And Barnes knew also about the interest of poetry. Form and interest, structure and selective observation—in these, in the lack of

¹ In *Further Letters of Gerard Manley Hopkins*, ed. C. C. Abbott, 1938. Letter to Patmore, 6th October, 1886.

² *Ibid.*

them, have been most apparent the weakness of English poetry (and painting too), in the last hundred years. Barnes, Hopkins, Hardy (though his forms, in spite of his study of Barnes, have an intricate tight roughness like a clump of brambles), Auden, though not I think Yeats, and not Eliot, in spite of their degrees of stature, have been strong where others have been weak in both of these qualities. Observation, not always well selected, and seldom well alloyed and organized in form, has been common enough. But by itself the similarity of the shape of poems on the pages of books shows at one look the monotonous lack of skill in form, and lack of concern for it, which have been so common. In the matter of interest, in selective observation, it may be that we are catching up; it may be that talented English writers of verse go on being deficient now mainly in any passion for the structure of verse. But, whatever the advance, it may be just as well to finish on Barnes's epithets, images, and substance.

I have quoted Barnes's view of nature, though not completely: man has fallen, and nature as well is not unmarred, but "the beautiful in nature"—that is "the unmarred result of God's first creative or forming will" and "the beautiful in art is the unmistakable working of man" in accordance with this unmarred result, which is good also by its fitness or harmony. The fallen working to the unfallen.¹ "Look for pleasure", Barnes wrote, "at the line of beauty, and other curves of charming grace in the wind-blown stems of grass, and bowing barley or wheat; in the water-shaken bulrush, in the leaves of plants, and in the petals of flowers; in the outlines of birds, and even their feathers and eggs; in the flowing lines of the greyhound, the horse and cat, and other animals; in the shell of the mollusc, and in the wings and markings of insects; in the swell of the downy cheek, the rounded chin, the flowing bendings of the pole and back, and the outswelling and inwinding lines from the head to the leg of woman stepping onward in the pride of youthful grace; and tell us whether nature does not show us graceful curves enough to win us from ugliness, even in a porringer."² And "fitness" made him an enemy of veneers and shams: "does nature make you a handsome tree or flower near your town, and slight her work in the world? or light up your water for a crowd-sought park, and not for the wanderers in the wilds? No. Nature and true art are faithful. . . . We have churches with a fine, high-wrought street end, and brick walls behind, out of man's sight (poor Pugin's eyesore!), as if the builders worked not for good, but

¹ "Thoughts on Beauty and Art", *Macmillan's Magazine*, vol. IV, 1861, p. 126.

² *Ibid.*, p. 128.

for man; and so a low aim has wrought a low work of art. Of such a sham some writer speaks somewhat in the following strain,—for I quote from memory:

They built the front, upon my word,
As fine as any abbey:
But thinking they might cheat the Lord,
They made the back part shabby.”¹

Nature must therefore be sifted for the authentic, for the beautiful in nature; and the heavy grain of this sifting, its force, is concentrated into Barnes’s epithets—“green-treed”:

As evenè aīr, in green-treed spring,
Do sheāke the new-sprung pa’sley bed—

or “sweet-breath’d”:

An’ sweet-breath’d children’s hangè heads
Be laid wi’ kisses, on their beds—

or “dim-roaded” night, or “blue-hill’d” as an epithet for the world, or “sky-back’d”, for the flight of clouds, and many more—epithets which are impressed with the force of experience. He told Palgrave that “he had taken Homer, and him only, as his model in aiming at the one proper epithet in describing”.² And this sifting gives his epithets a serenity and wide truth that one misses in the particular detail of much Preraphaelite description, from Tennyson to the passionate observation of Hopkins. Read, or broadcast to an audience who have not the texts in front of them and do not know them, Dyer’s eighteenth-century *Grongar Hill* and Tennyson’s over-embroidered *Progress of Spring* (an early poem, it is true), and one poem is fuddling, the other comes to the audience clear through the simplicity and sparingness of its effects. Barnes’s poems, are, for effects, half-way between the two; but riding his Pegasus on the rein, he would never go so far from the wide truth as Tennyson peering unfamiliarly into the inside of a horse-chestnut flower:

a but less vivid hue
Than of that islet in the chestnut-bloom
Flamed in his cheek—

Barnes holds the rein at some such limit as “where the black-spotted bean-bloom is out” or “thatch-brow’d windows”.

¹ “Thoughts on Beauty and Art”, *Macmillan’s Magazine*, vol. IV, 1861, p. 136.

² *Francis Turner Palgrave*, by Gwenllïan Palgrave, 1899, p. 185.

THE HARP OF AEOLUS

He keeps in with this restraint in preferring the quickly-taken truth of descriptions of states of light, states of air, and states of colour—sometimes all three in one. For instance in *My Love's Guardian Angel*, which I have quoted:

As in the cool-air'd road I come by,
—in the night . . .

in

High over head the white-rimm'd clouds went on,
Wi' woone a-comèn up, vor woone a-gone;
An' feäir they floated in their sky-back'd flight,
But still they never meäde a sound to me—

or

I'm out when snow's a-lyèn white
In keen-air'd vields that I do pass,
An' moonbeams, vrom above, do smite
On ice an' sleeper's window-glass—

or in three stanzas from *In the Spring*:

. . . O grey-leafy pinks o' the geärdèn,
Now bear her sweet blossoms;
Now deck wi' a rwose bud, O briar,
Her head in the Spring.

O light-rollèn wind, blow me hither
The vaice ov her talkèn,
O bring veom her veet the light doust
She do tread in the Spring.

O zun, meäke the gil' cups all glitter
In goold all around her,
An' meäke o' the deäisys' white flowers
A bed in the Spring . . .

But Barnes's use of colour is often, as I have said, the setting of one colour sharp against another one, a visual antithesis, like two halves of a line in Pope balanced against each other. Long after he had begun this, he began to look deliberately for its counterpart and warrant in nature, making a list of 'the contacts of sundry pairs of colours on natural bodies', such as white and black in the bean blossom, yellow and orange in toadflax or the brimstone butterfly. "Nature is very sparing of showy contrasts of warm and cold colours.

Red and blue are very rare, and of yellow and blue the cases are but few; and black and blue are found in lepidoptera more often than white and blue are seen in our Flora and Fauna.”¹

Blue and white, all the same, was the coupling he most often repeated, though frequently he set yellow against black:

There near the wheatrick’s yellow back,
That shone like gold before the sky,
Some rooks with wings of glossy black
Came on down wheeling from on high
And lightly pitched their feet
Among the stubble of the wheat—

White sometimes against red (I have quoted one example—elder flowers against red campion):

Oh! the cherry-tree blossom’d all white
And again with its cherries was red—

Or white against green as in the cuckoo lines or *Zummer Thoughts in Winter Time*:

When white sleev’d mowers’ whetted blades
Rung sh’ill along the green-bough’d gleades.

But blue and white began with *Orra* (and even before that in a poem in his first book of 1820):

And softly now her snowy eyelids close,
Weighed down by slumber, o’er her bright blue eyes,
As bound beneath the cold and wintry snows,
The azure wave of ocean frozen lies—

and they were observed together again and again, in his wife, in skies, in butterflies, in flowers against sky or reflected sky. Examples are in *White an’ Blue*, where the colours are the substance of the poem, in *The Water Crowfoot*:

Thy beds o’ snow-white buds do gleam
So feäir upon the sky-blue stream

—in *Zummer Stream*:

There by the path, in grass knee-high,
Wer buttervlies in giddy flight,
All white above the deäsies white,
Or blue below the deep blue sky

¹ “Thoughts on Beauty and Art”, *Macmillan’s Magazine*, vol. IV, 1861, p. 132.

THE HARP OF AEOLUS

—in *Not Sing at Night* (a poem not reprinted since its appearance in the Poet's Corner which Barnes inhabited so often in the *Dorset County Chronicle*):

Or where below the clear blue sky
The snow white linen hung to dry,

And blue and white well express the mathematics, the clear, the serene, and the harmonious in Barnes's make. Blue and white are the serenity of nature—the nature, said Barnes, which “is the best school of art”, adding “and of schools of art among men those are best that are nature's best interpreters”.¹

IX

We have too much of a habit now of reflecting our discontent with an author's political convictions, or his political indifference, or his inconsistency, back on to all of his work, as though the issues of the sadness of our time were immeasurably greater than ever before in the human race. We forget that there are still for each of us what we must regard as constant transcending verities, that what appears to be “reaction” may be much more vitalizing than the thirty-shilling suit of modernity or *avantgarde*, or immediate politics, that being a trimmer need not imply a lack of inward truth, whether the trimmers are Dryden, or Turgenev, or a good many living European authors who have touches of Munich about them. Barnes may, in a very good sense, be a minor poet; but not in the sense that his writing is a mess of words occasionally lit by a sparkle of pure intuition. And I may have suggested, wrongly, if you recall the quotation from Patmore, that Barnes was indifferent to the times, or separated from them entirely. As far as not being indifferent possesses value, that was not so. The anxious bewilderment between faith and science scarcely reached him, and scarcely ripples in his poetry. I can only recall one open reference to it in his poem, *The Happy Daes When I Wer Young*:

Vrom where wer all this venom brought
To kill our hope an' taint our thought?
Clear Brook! thy water coodden bring
Sich venom vrom thy rocky spring—

—the venom being “what's atā'k'd about By many now—that to despise The lā's o' God an' man is wise”; and he affirmed in another poem

¹ Ibid.

WILLIAM BARNES, 1800-1886

My peace is rest, my faith is hope
An' freedom's my unbounded scope.

"That is a subject connected with politics, not with poetry", he said to his son when he reminded him of a request that he should write a Dorset recruiting poem. "That is a subject connected with politics, not with poetry. I have never written any of my poems but one with a drift. I write pictures which I see in my mind".¹ The one poem, the early Dorset Eclogue, *The Times*, with its fable of the pig and the crow, he had written against the Chartists. He felt that the Chartists would unsettle the Dorset labourer without remedying his condition; and, with his views of God, nature, man, harmony and fitness, what did disturb him, deeply, was the unfitness he saw in the social development of the nineteenth century, and in the consequent decay of freedom; the unfitness which caused him to write the curious amalgam of wisdom and simplicity he called *Views of Labour and Gold* (1859), in which he was concerned "to show the possible effect of the increase of great working-capitals and monopolies on the labourer's freedom or welfare". Two extracts will give its tenor:

"The kindness which is done by capital when it affords employment to people from whom, by a monopoly, it has taken their little business, is such as one might do to a cock by adorning his head with a plume made of feathers pulled out of his own tail."

"It is more healthy to rack one's mind in effectual devices to win a skilful end, than to work as a machine without a free aim or thought; and so, as a Hindoo poet says, to be like a smith's bellows, breathing without life."

But Barnes's social views, simply consistent with his views of the world of life and art, are only a stroke in the drawing of a full portrait of Barnes. They are less important than the wavy, mazy, slow, river-like rhythm of his poem *The Clote* (clote is the yellow water-lily):

O zummer clote, when the brook's a-sliden
So slow an' smooth down his zedgy bed,
Upon thy brode leaves so siafe a-riden
The water's top wi' thy yoller head,
By black-rin'd allers,
An' weedy shallers,
Thee then dost float, goolden zummer clote.

—less important than the rhythm with which he patterned his life and his impulses to describe and sing. There are poems which are

¹ *Life of William Barnes*, p. 323.

slightly embarrassing, in which Barnes tails—I hesitate to describe it so—into a provincialism of sentiment; but his tailings are more innocent and slighter than the monstrous wallowing falls into the same weakness—not confined to Dorset—of some of Barnes's greatest coevals.¹ And even his weakest poems are strengthened by their pattern and dexterity. In the narrow sense, there are not art-and-society reasons for urging that Barnes should be read, urging that he should have the status given to him ungrudgingly by Patmore, Hopkins, and Thomas Hardy. He may—and I think he did—give to English writing more than has ever been suggested or allowed. Hardy he very much influenced, and Hardy's rhetoric and pattern were the first to strike the authentic note in Auden's life: "He was both my Keats and my Carl Sandburg"²—the note and the Contemporary Scene. And how much effect did he have on Gerard Hopkins, who read Barnes when he was an undergraduate, complimented him by critical admiration, and put some of his poems to music? Both Hopkins and Barnes were after a revitalized language for poetry. Were Barnes's poems—to name only a little thing—the seeds of Hopkins's own concern for Welsh and for Anglo-Saxon? Is it entirely a coincidence of period and a consequence of identical aims that "or as a short-stand-night-watch quick foreflown" and "which at early morn with blowing-green-blithe bloom"³ are not lines by Hopkins, but translations from Old Friesian by Barnes? Or that both invented their own critical terms rather than take them ready-made and devitalized from philologists and prosody? Or was Barnes not the instigator of much which has come down through Hardy and through Hopkins as well?

Yet these questions are only, again, the more trivial baits to reading him—to reading one of the few nineteenth-century poets who "conceived of art, like life, as being a self-discipline rather than a self-expression". Barnes, if he were more read, could become one of the healthy, if lesser, antidotes to the Romantic disease. He is not a rustic aberration; but just as Barnes kept in Dorset during his life, so he has been kept there ever since. The point is to deliver him—to extract him from his rather snobbishly affixed integument of mud; to exhibit his mind's cool-aired quality.

¹ There is nothing metaphysical about Barnes; and the Persian poet he appears to have liked best, Sa'di, was also the least metaphysical, or mystical, of the great Persians, the most "homely", and the one most abundantly translated into English between 1850 and the eighties; though he also admired Háfiz. Barnes greatly liked *The Angel in the House*, but I doubt if Patmore's *Unknown Eros* (which he read) would have spoken much to him.

² "A Literary Transference", *Southern Review*, vol. VI, No. 1, Summer, 1940, p. 80.

³ *Early England and the Saxon English*, 1869, p. 173.

IO

THOMAS HARDY¹

WHAT is the common way of regarding Thomas Hardy, whose birth is commemorated this year, and whose life stretched across the nineteenth century to our own, through war and war? Other professionals—Henry James, for instance—have always patronized him a bit. Not quite an author, not quite a poet, not quite an artist; and also, no doubt, not quite a gentleman. Not at all Browning, not Mr. T. S. Eliot. The man who wrote "*When I set out for Lyonesse*" and "*Only a man harrowing clods*". Not quite a peasant, but nearly. And he said that the Odyssey or the Iliad was "in the *Marmion* class". I doubt if Mr. Clive Bell would think of Hardy and Cézanne together. I doubt if many of those who read, or advise us to read, *The Dynasts* at the present time, go far deeper than the topicality of Napoleon's threat to invade England or the resemblance between Hitler and Napoleon as two products of the Unseen Forces and the interplay of the Eternal Abstractions.

Hardy was our prelude. He was not (nor was Cézanne) a lumpy, honest and simple peasant; but a complicated, cultured, resolute, narrow, sensitive man of the new professional classes of the nineteenth century; his profession, that is his preliminary profession, being architecture. He appeared simple, because his effects were reduced to the apparent simplicity of bone. He was a man without ambition, able to conceive ideas, roll them round, feed them, and mature them slowly through a very long time. He was penetrated by natural objects and phenomena, which he felt thoroughly as themselves, and, in one act, as images of the knot of human life. As he saw one thing, he saw another: the little old simpleton saw the affectation of his superior contemporaries (Walter Pater's manner "is that of one carrying weighty ideas without spilling them"); but he did not wish to seem a depreciator and so he destroyed nearly all the notes he had made of this kind.

It seems to me facile to claim that the profession in which a man is bred—a passive act—must be related to the profession in which he discovers himself. The link may be there, but it can seldom be proved and it belongs usually to that order of unscientific and sentimental statements about descent which live in the first chapters of biography.

¹ Written for the *Architectural Review*, for the Hardy centenary in 1940.

An anthologist, for example, has just detected a strain of Celtic mysticism in the poet Robert Stephen Hawker, though he was English by descent and training, *because he lived in Cornwall*. So I am sure it is wrong to say that such and such happened in Hardy's writing, because he was an architect. Architecture was not vitally prominent in Hardy's work, certainly not in Hardy's imagination. How could it be? Architecture is a poor art—a poor professional art—for a strong sense of life. How can a young architect give form, except in drawings, to the urgencies of his feeling? I presume that architecture must be a profession of competent channels—competent hacks, if you like—through whom the already shaped ideas are put into stone, brick, or steel. The ideas change a little between entering and leaving the channel, but the architects who feel the time, and feel history and first shape the ideas, are very few. They are the rare, widely separated men of genius, fortunate in the coincidence of their own powers and a receptive time in which many buildings are demanded to fill some new social need. Since the means of architectural realization are costly, communal, and non-individual, so great an urgency as Thomas Hardy's in his youth must have broken out elsewhere unless there had been some fluke of favourable circumstance. And, as it was, Hardy showed little architectural talent, either as a draughtsman or a designer. He acquiesced in architecture, and was pushed into it by his father, who was a builder, and had worked for Mr. John Hicks, the Dorchester architect and church restorer by whom Hardy was first instructed. "Hardy was a born bookworm, that and that alone was unchanging in him; he had sometimes, too, wished to enter the Church, but he cheerfully agreed to go to Mr. Hicks's."¹

So much for that. And now it is established that Hardy and architecture came accidentally together (much as a lawyer's son may become a lawyer and then a landscape painter), it will be safe to say how his practice of architecture tinged, for example, his poetry; and to affirm that if Hardy's architectural talent was mediocre, he had that sense of human history in physical images which architecture needs and which so few architects ever possess.

Hardy worked chiefly on church restoration, vicarages and rectories, and schools for the London School Board. He stayed for some time with Mr. Hicks, sketching and surveying churches in the West of England, and destroying (to his later sorrow) much medieval,

¹ This, and the quotations which follow, and the biographical details, are taken from Florence Hardy's *Life of Thomas Hardy*.

Jacobean and Georgian detail. He came to London in 1862, and after getting politeness but no employment from Benjamin Ferrey, Pugin's pupil and biographer, he found a job with Arthur Blomfield. For ten years Hardy wavered between architecture and letters. Sir Arthur Blomfield—he became one of mediocrity's knights—was congenial to work with. They sang hymns together, when there was little to do. Hardy was continually writing poems—to Blomfield's knowledge—and even began to turn *Ecclesiastes* in Spenserian stanzas. He drew funny pictures on the Adam mantelpiece in the offices in the Adelphi. He did strange jobs—superintending the removal of the tombs and corpses and skeletons of Old St. Pancras churchyard for the Midland Railway, for example. Behind a hoarding, by gas flares, the work went on all night, the loose skeletons being carried on boards. He won the R.I.B.A. silver medal in 1862 with an essay on Architectural Polychromy (the essay was presumably not good enough to be printed in the transactions of the Institute, and is now lost). He paid much attention to pictures, he began to write novels. He went back to Dorchester and helped Mr. Hicks. He helped a Weymouth architect who took over Hicks's practice—and this brought him a wife when he went down to advise on the restoration of St. Juliot Church in North Cornwall. His wife, Miss Emma Gifford opened the door to him in the rectory; and so one could say that architecture introduced him to some of his happiest and bitterest times and led to such poems as *Lyonesse* (written—and how that knowledge revives it!—on the way back from Cornwall) and, forty years later, to the deeply pathetic emotional retrospect, *After a Journey*. In 1872 he was designing schools with Professor Roger Smith, but *Under The Greenwood Tree* had now been written and his own impulse and the prescience of Miss Gifford were pushing him absolutely away into literature.

At Blomfield's his not being ambitious was observed; and he recorded in his old age how his mind was then beginning to fill with poetry: "A sense of the truth of poetry, of its supreme place in literature, had awakened itself in me. At the risk of ruining all my worldly prospects I dabbled in it . . . was forced out of it. . . . It came back upon me All was of the nature of being led by a mood, without foresight or regard to whither it led."

"Churchy" was how Hardy described himself; but Hardy's churchiness was that of a man involved in humanity; who believed that everything should be done to ease "mortals' progress through a world not worthy of them". "I have been looking for God for fifty years," he wrote down in 1890, "I think if He had existed I should

have discovered Him." Churches were to Hardy places sacred to tragedy rather than to God, where an answer had been pitifully looked for and never found. So it is ironic from one angle, and right from another, that he tidied up so many churches in the interests of a creed he believed to be no longer of use. If he had wished to build and set up in practice, it is not easy to see anything he could have built out of his full and peculiar churchy heart in the fifty years after 1870. His churches to his God, a Cause neither moral nor immoral, loveless and hateless, are something for which no one would have provided the stone and cement. Yet, I repeat, Hardy began where the rare and true architect should begin—with man, not first with those forms which sprout from man, or with his clothes, however expressive they may be. The accidentals of his union with architecture brought him not only into the happy and sad experience of his marriage ("the ultimate aim of the poet", he wrote down from Sir Leslie Stephen, "should be to touch our hearts by showing his own"), gave him not only persons to write about (such as the church-restorer in *A Pair of Blue Eyes* or George Somerset in *The Laodicean*), but forced him into the company of vital images. They brought him into the yet intolerable London of 1862, the cruel capital of Baal which Dostoevsky saw in that year or the next,¹ the prediction from the Apocalypse, with the fish-flares of gas, the drunkenness, evident wealth, evident poverty, the Haymarket full of whores, and the City still drained into cesspits built after the Great Fire, a ten foot bank of human droppings piling up where the river Lea emerged at Barking Creek, and a stink from the same substance in the river pervading the Houses of Parliament. And so Hardy observed year after year the false clean-up—the cleansing of the Lea and the accumulation of filth in the human heart, breaking into wars; the black comparison between material growth and moral repression on which he speculated so much in so many poems.

Herein, with his power of sight and vision, is rooted Thomas Hardy's human sensibility; by which the pilers-up of Maiden Castle or the Thames-side business blocks are hardly possessed. Whether he had that architectural sensibility in a more restricted way—that feeling for the historicity and humanity of form and ornament and the fitting of building into landscape, which is commoner among amateurs than architects, I doubt, although I could quote such remarks as "the ashlar backyards of Bath have more dignity than any brick front in Europe". Hardy digs rather for the general root of all

¹ In "Winter Notes on My Summer Impressions", translated in the *European Quarterly* No. 2, August 1934.

buildings. He goes to St. Marks, he is anti-Ruskin, he finds it squat, oriental, barbaric, built on "weak, flexuous, constructional lines." He records chiefly that the floor "of every colour and rich device, is worn into undulations by the infinite multitudes of feet that have trodden it". He goes to Salisbury into the Close, at night, "walked to the West front and watched the moonlight creep round upon the statuary of the façade—stroking tentatively and then more firmly the prophets, the martyrs, the bishops, the kings and the queens". He goes round Westminster Abbey by lantern at midnight, or into Wimborne Minster:

How smartly the quarters of the hour march by
That the jack-o'-clock never forgets;
Ding-dong; and before I have traced a cusp's eye,
Or got the true twist of the ogee over,
A double ding-dong ricochetts.

Just so did he clang here before I came,
And so will he clang when I'm gone
Through the Minster's cavernous hollows—the same
Tale of hours never more to be will he deliver
To the speechless midnight and dawn.

I grow to conceive it a call to ghosts,
Whose mould lies below and around.
Yes; the next "Come, come", draws them out
from their posts,
And they gather, and one shade appears, and another,
As the eve-damps creeps from the ground . . .

Always, you see, a church, always a meeting place of the dead, the living, and the unborn. On architecture as an art, and as an art of the age through which he was living, I do not know that Hardy pronounced anything peculiar or deep. He was much impressed by the Englishness of the Perpendicular (read "The Abbey Mason" in *Satires of Circumstances*). He discerned that architecture and poetry resembled each other, "both arts having to carry a rational content inside their artistic form"; and perhaps it is truly said that his poems have a precise Gothic intricacy, even on the page. But it is curious—curiously instructive—that he interprets his period more certainly when he thinks of painting, than when he thinks of his own profession. "I am more interested," he said, "in the high ideas of a feeble executant than in the high execution of a feeble thinker." He preferred Zurbarán to Velásquez. He put down in 1886 "my art is

to intensify the expression of things, as is done by Crivelli, Bellini, etc., so that the heart and inner meaning is made vividly visible". More to be remarked—one thinks of Balzac's *Chef d'oeuvre Inconnu* or justly again of Cézanne—is the statement he made to himself in January, 1887:

"After looking at the landscape ascribed to Bonington in our drawing-room I feel that Nature is played out as a Beauty, but not as a mystery. I don't want to see landscapes, i.e. scenic paintings of them, because I don't want to see the original realities—as optical effects, that is. I want to see the deeper reality underlying the scenic, the expression of what are sometimes called abstract imaginings.

The 'simply natural' is interesting no longer. The much decried, mad, late-Turner rendering is now necessary to create my interest. The exact truth as to material fact ceases to be of importance in art—it is a student's style—the style of a period when the mind is serene and unawakened to the tragical mysteries of life; when it does not bring anything to the object that coalesces with and translates the qualities that are already there—half hidden it may be—and the two united are pictured as the All."

That is the best gloss on Hardy's own aims in his poetry, in which, and not in his novels, he has given us the most to feed upon. "A skeleton—the one used in these lectures—is hung up inside the window. We face it as we sit. Outside the band is playing, and the children are dancing. I can see their little figures through the window past the skeleton dangling in front"—there he is. I understand, I think, why Mr. Eliot, setting Yeats beside Hardy, believes Hardy to be obviously a minor poet. Hardy and Eliot interpret life very differently. The churchiness of each is differently composed; and Yeats is a pagan, but a purer writer, less crinkle-crinkle in his substance. Hardy works more by seeing, less by the imagination. The scope of his sensuality is limited, and he repeats himself with too little variation. But I also understand why it is that poetry in English cannot avoid Hardy, as, I believe it can well and does avoid Mr. Eliot. It is not dealing in insolence with insularity, but pointing to a fact of inheritance, of transmission, if I remark that Mr. Eliot is an American (who has spoken too much in ungenerative fragments and qualification), and Thomas Hardy an Englishman. What Mr. Auden has admitted, that Hardy was his "poetical father", that he provided him with a "modern rhetoric which was more fertile and adaptable to different themes than any of Eliot's gas-works and rats' feet which

one could steal but never make one's own",¹ many more poets of my generation could also admit, with gratitude. He recorded "impressions, not convictions", was an artist, not a moralist or philosopher, and observed at once the language, the age, and the world. "Style—consider the Wordsworthian dictum (the more perfectly the natural object is reproduced the more truly poetic the picture). This reproduction is achieved by seeing into the *heart of a thing* (as rain, wind, for instance) . . ." He admired the realism of Crabbe, and narrow as he may have been, he brought back a selective appropriate realism, a truth, a congruence, an honesty. In 1909, in answer to an enquiry from Berlin: "We call our age an age of Freedom. Yet Freedom under her incubus of armaments, territorial ambitions smugly disguised as patriotism, superstitions, conventions of every sort, is of such stunted proportions in this her so-called time, that the human race is likely to be extinct before Freedom arrives at maturity." In 1920, when he was seventy-nine: "January 19th Coming back from Talbothays by West Stafford Cross I saw Orion upside down in a pool of water under an oak." Here, then, are two observations, and I reverence Hardy as an observer, one who discerned with terrible accuracy the intensification of evil and was glum and numb less, on the whole, over individuals than over the events which victimize them and kick them on through a world to which they are superior.

I recall the last lines of his poem on the Armistice of the earlier war (we are less charitable):

Calm fell. From Heaven distilled a clemency;
There was peace on earth, and silence in the sky;
Some could, some could not, shake off misery;
The Sinister Spirit sneered: "It had to be!"
And again the Spirit of Pity whispered, "Why?"

I recall now a letter written by Rainer Maria Rilke in the intensity of the last war:

" . . . no longer can the measure of the single heart be applied, yet at other times it was the union of earth and sky and of all distances and depths. What, at other times was the cry of a drowning man; and even if it *was* the village idiot who reached up from the water with a cry grown suddenly clearer, everything rushed towards him and was on his side and against the disaster, and the quickest man risked his life for him . . . people cling to the war

¹ In the *Southern Review*, Summer 1940.

like misers with all the weight of their heavy consciences. It is a human bungling, just as everything in the last decades was human bungling, bad work, profiteering, except for a few painful voices and figures, except for a few warning prophets, except for a few zealots who held to their own hearts, which stood contrary to the stream. Rodin, how often, how everlastingly did he reiterate words of disapproval and suspicion against the course of things. It was too much for me, I took it for exhaustion and yet it was judgement. And Cézanne, when they told him of outside affairs, in the quiet streets of Aix, he could burst out and shriek at his companion: '*Le monde, c'est terrible.*' One thinks of him like a prophet and one longs for another to cry and howl so,—but they have all gone, the old men who might have had the power to weep now before the peoples of the world."¹

Thomas Hardy was one of them. How bitterly appropriate that the centenary of his birth should fall to be celebrated in the year of the no less terrifying and even more immense and complicated war in Europe.

¹ The translation is by R. F. C. Hull.

II

COURBET, CHIRICO, AND CONSTABLE

*The Oak dies as well as the Lettuce, but its Eternal Image
and Individuality never dies, but renews by its seed.*

WILLIAM BLAKE.

SOME one, who, it appears, will give the picture to England, has just paid over £43,000 for Constable's "Stratford Mill". A few days before the sale, in a few ill-chosen words, the President of the Royal Academy exaggerated the picture in *The Times* into being "without exaggeration, the world's best landscape"; for which, one agrees, £43,000 would not be too much. But though balanced against a picture, a good picture, forty-three pennies or forty-three thousand pounds are all the same, the purchaser, if not the President, would no doubt believe that the price he paid was an index of this landscape's profundity; and that Constable, artist as he is, should be rated, in any of his works, at such an index, reveals precisely where we are in England. We have taken, and we did it a long while ago, what Blake named "the iron gate down Sneaking Lane". So long have we ceased to attend to discernment, so long confided in our mediocrity of "instinct", so long rated art by auction values, so long been habituated to book clubs, that we can believe Constable to have been endowed to paint "the world's best landscape".

It comes out of forgetfulness; and two sets of confusion. Forgetfulness of the existence of the highest, inmost possibility of art; a confusion of such art with the modern arts of pathos, described in that judgement of Sir Leslie Stephen's that "the ultimate aim of the poet should be to touch our hearts by showing his own". (Thomas Hardy also noted a madder absolute of Stephen's that "We cannot write living poetry on the ancient model. The Gods and heroes are too dead, and we cannot seriously sympathize with . . . the idealized prize-fighter"). The second confusion is, confusing the value of Constable with his peculiar place and influence in the changes of art and vision. Constable was an innovator, in the sense of being an earlyish vehicle of change; but innovation, *per se*, is only a virtue, a value, for pedants. Constable was determined, and narrow, a small man with intimations of the greatness, the perennial fruitfulness, of others. His paintings are a disturbed autobiography, a showing of his own restless heart, an ungratified longing for the heart's calm

sunshine, which he confused with a picturizing of the music of nature. Honest, finally humble, Constable would never have claimed ability even to paint the tenth best landscape in the world. But his way of painting was damagingly susceptible of imitation, and iteration almost, because of a central weakness, or, at least, superficiality, of vision. His illumination—(the final, finished pictures show this again and again)—was not inward and powerful enough to carry him unweakened through sketch and version to a victorious, still illuminated end; a fact which tempted critics, in defence of Constable, into evasion and excuse founded upon circumstances of fashion and of the market in Constable's life:¹ When sketch is mentioned one needs to recall Blake's private note on Sketches and Michelangelo:

Sir Joshua sent his own Portrait to
The birth place of Michael Angelo,
And in the hand of the simpering tool
He put a dirty paper scroll,
And on the paper, to be polite,
Did "Sketches by Michael Angelo" write.
The Florentine said "'Tis a Dutch English bore,
Michael Angelo's name writ on Rembrandt's door."
The Florentines call it an English Fetch,
For Michael Angelo did never sketch.
Every line of his has Meaning
And needs neither suckling nor weaning . . .

We have lived a hundred and fifty years now in the beatification, the deification of the first impulse, until we are fuddled, however much we have learned of the generating of art, between Michelangelo and child drawings from the progressive school; but the full conception of the Masters cannot be sketched, nor does their mastery ripen in sketches. Masters are not *employed* by scenes, as Constable was, in his own words. Masters do not remark "I always sit still till I see some living thing; because if any such appears, it is sure to be appropriate to the place. If no living thing shows itself, I put none in my picture."² Masters do not wish, if they could afford it, always to paint in the open air. But then a hundred and fifty years, immersing us also to the forehead in connoisseurship, art history and art councils, have taught us to distinguish no more between the primal and the secondary, to understand no more Blake's "O that

¹ This problem is discussed, reasonably, by Sir Kenneth Clark in *The Hay Wain* (The Gallery Books No. 5), though he redresses over-praise of the sketches by over praising the final pictures.

² W. P. Frith: *Further Reminiscences*, 1888.

men would seek immortal moments!", to remember no more that a very few men have sought and found such moments. Constable is not one of them. He shows his heart, and he touches ours; but imagination does more than touch hearts, and so, could one decide upon it, would the best landscape in the world.

Constable, knowing the truth, spoke of his art himself as "limited and abstracted". He was able, being in one sense no greater than his time, to base it upon no more of nature than sufficed for feelings reflected from himself to nature and back again; less the substance of nature, remould it, personalize it as he might, than, as I say, the music of nature which expressed the vagueness of his own yearnings. "With particulars," he said of Gainsborough, "he had nothing to do; his object was to deliver a fine sentiment." With particulars, Constable had only a little more to do; and his object, at any way, his practice, by way of generalized states, light, rain, greenness, was, to deliver himself. Now it is this generalization, this absence of the firm, the grained, the solid, the poetry of the solid, by which after the foremost painting from Giotto, through Michelangelo down to Poussin and then, for the time being, to Courbet has passed through recollection's eyes, Constable's art reduces itself to superficiality, to excellent, fresh satisfaction (as in the "Weymouth Bay") only of certain elementary needs and moods. "Il faut encanailler l'art"; but how essential for the inmost satisfactions, the inmost poetry of art, no less than for raising the pathetic above the sentimental, is the low company, the realized company, realize it as one will, of objects, and attributes and qualities of the object; of rocks, trees, water, legs, cloud, a hammock! If Holderlin says "blue" in a poem, a life's learning of blue, in all its particularities, exists behind it. If Clare says "love" in his Northampton asylum, how much love has been required to give the words its power, the line, the stanza, the poem its rhythm and its ability to be compelling; love of that girl whom he hit in the eye with a green walnut, love of everything which lives—

The flowers join lips below, the leaves above
And every sound that meets the air is love!

Blake, by the way we isolate his conclusions, neglect his other remarks, and are remarkably blind to his art, we hold to be one who was an enemy to nature; but that is confounded by more than his pictures; by his advice to Samuel Palmer, by his letter, more than twenty years before, to Dr. Trusler: "The tree which moves some to tears of joy is in the Eyes of others only a Green thing which stands in the way . . . But to the Eyes of the Man of Imagination, Nature is Imagination

itself. As a man is, so he sees. As the Eye is formed, such are its Powers. . . . What is it sets Homer, Virgil and Milton in so high a rank of Art? Why is the Bible more Entertaining and Instructive than any other book? Is it not because they are addressed to the Imagination, which is Spiritual Sensation, and but mediately to the Understanding or Reason?" And how many times does not Blake insist upon the Particular—"What is General Nature? Is there Such a Thing? What is General Knowledge? Is there Such a Thing? Strictly speaking All Knowledge is Particular." Or, "They say there is no Strait Line in Nature; this Is a Lie, like all that they say. For there is Every Line in Nature. But I will tell them what is Not in Nature. An Even Tint is not in Nature; it produces Heaviness. Nature's Shadows are Ever varying, and a Ruled Sky that is quite Even never can Produce a Natural Sky; the same with every Object in a Picture, its Spots are its beauties. Now, Gentlemen Critics, how do you like this?"

Returning to Courbet, it is not that he sought after immortal moments; his was mainly the pathetic art in its solidest nature (which can only be mixed with Whistler and the Chinese, to travesty, in Mr. Victor Passmore's skill, the genuineness of each); his was art as much of the nineteenth century as the landscapes of Ford Madox Brown or the poems of Thomas Hardy or Gerard Hopkins, or the *Sportsman's Sketches* of Turgenev. But so much appears to have been decided and settled, as we look back, by the time he was painting, that we make no mistake of awarding Courbet a rank higher than he possessed because he held in his hand the beginning of a thread in the history of art. Constable we are tempted to decorate with an Order of Extreme Merit, less because of that food which we, as individual souls, can derive as we stand in front of the agitation of "Hadley Castle" or the imposed serenity of "The Hay-Wain", or the freshness of a hundred sketches, than because, to our insular historical pride, Constable begat the Impressionists. Courbet disturbs us into no such temptation, into no likelihood of paying £43,000 for one of his landscapes. Indeed, we are still ready to call out "realism" behind Courbet, as though we still preferred high company (the high company of that Ned Jones who became Sir Edward Burne Jones, or of Watts, or Ricketts?) still believed that Courbet had gone too far, still recollected the Commune and the exile. Expatiating on painters offering us, not imagination, not the monumental, but the desirable life, expatiating on his own desire to walk into frames, and sunbathe in some classical sea-port in the Italian light of Claude (where he would be horribly out of place in trunks), we still nourish a species of

dilettante who may stand for that refinement which works against realism, against imagination; which would hardly like to be inside the frame walking among the bushes where some bull-bottomed big breasted girl of Courbet's steps out of the clear water.

Giorgio de Chirico, one of the few artists of our century I find it possible in his maturest, visionary canvases, to admire with only few reserves—possible to feed upon, has written with tenderness and insight about Courbet; and he has established the truth, demolished the perjorative nonsense, about Courbet's "realism".¹ Both Courbet and Madox Brown (born within two years of each other) believed they were bound to paint "things as they are". Courbet painted his "Stone-Breakers" as they were: "I invented nothing, dear friend; every day when I went for a ride, I saw these men."² But if "Réalism: G. Courbet" was written by him on his exhibition hut, some greater portion of eternity, pathos or no, was written into his heart. "He appears to us always in the atmosphere of his epoch for what he was," wrote de Chirico, "a romantic." And he defined his romanticism: "Romantic! Curious word, full of meaning and the far-away dream. Many suspicions and misunderstandings arise from it. For us it means only art that is felt and inspires feeling, art that is firmly placed on the solid base of reality, art which makes us aware of that something of the great mystery of the infinite, which in a moon-lit night breathes through the rents of the flying clouds. . . . Homer was a romantic."

Nature, of course, Constable regarded; but he looked at the daylight sky, at light, he diluted the solid base into personal yearning. His was a feeble romanticism of the pathetic fallacy. He is *in* his pictures, in a way Courbet is not to be found in the grain of that vision of nature which he realized. More truly, more lastingly, Courbet and nature, individual and continual, are there in an equipoise together, in the low exciting tones, say, of the greens of a forest or the unsuperficial greenish-blue of a sky into which the trees are growing, in the grain of limestone ledges, in the solid "déroulement" of waves;³ even in black and white reproduction, this poetic grain of Courbet's

¹ Giorgio de Chirico. *Gustave Courbet*. Valori Plastici, Rome, 1926.

² One may learn much by comparing Courbet's "Stone-Breakers" with the similar English subjects by John Brett at Liverpool and George Wallis at Birmingham. If Courbet began from the roadside one may suspect Henry Wallis began from that quotation out of Carlyle "For us was thy back so bent. In us were thy straight limbs and fingers so deformed. . . ." with which he labelled the picture when it went to the Academy in 1858.

³ de Chirico quotes Baudelaire

Homme libre, toujours tu chériras la mer!
La mer est ton miroir; tu contemples ton âme
Dans le déroulement infini de sa lame . . .

paint does not disappear. But without colour, how ordinary, how merely photographic, graphic of immediate light and glance Constable appears in the plates of some book! And even more so in his drawings. At first one feels in front of Constable, "This is nature. This is a wet sky over Hampstead"; then one feels "This is ordinary nature, the skin of nature"; then one realizes "This is Constable, or Constable naturized". In front of Courbet, one feels nature, solid, real, interpreted from the bloom to the bone, made into poetry; realizes, as de Chirico maintains, that Courbet "felt more profoundly than Delacroix the sense of reality" and "is for this very reason more poetic and romantic than Delacroix". "Courbet is a story teller" says de Chirico. "*Nulla sine narratione ars*. We do not mean to insist that the word narration or story must imply an anecdote, an event, or an historic fact. The work of art must *tell* something beyond the limits of its volume. The object or the figure must tell poetically something which is even distant from them, something which even their volume materially conceals." More generous, more mature than Constable, Courbet's story is the pathos of the world, Constable's is the pathos of Constable, of that modicum of the world contained in Constable.

The solid base of reality produces within and throughout a picture, both form and composition—that composition, as Henry James says in one of his prefaces, without which a picture "slights its most precious chance for beauty". Constable has the femininity, Courbet the masculinity, of form; and the femininity has its place, if inferior, and has its worth. But the composers in art, from first to last (excluding those who impose upon colours a mere geometry), are those artists who have most fully known, and felt, the solidity, the ins, the outs, the hollows, protuberances, surfaces, particularities and spots, the structure and the growth and the volume of objects. Look not only at Courbet, but at Giotto, Masaccio, Piero della Francesca, Michelangelo, Poussin, Stubbs, Velásquez, Cézanne, Mary Cassatt, Thomas Eakins, Seurat, Henry Moore, Wyndham Lewis, Paul Klee, major and minor; at great and lesser poets, Milton, Herbert, Dryden, Hardy; it is a conclusion. No such chance of "beauty" ever was within the possibility of Constable. Examine for absence of composition the oil sketch (Venturi evasively has suggested that we should talk about Constable's "creations", not his sketches)—the oil sketch of "The Hay Wain"; or ask how an artist could compose, who was employed by nature or waited for a living creature to walk into the scene which employed him? If Courbet said of his "Stone-Breakers", "I invented nothing, dear friend," yet he composed the old man and

the young, and all about them. He did not slight composition, whether in the four legs and four arms of "The Wrestlers", the delicate legs of the fighting stags which dip into the snow, or in the body which lies like one stroke of an X across the hammock.

The solid base (with form and composition), the romanticism, the poetry, the story—all of these, within his own definitions for Courbet, not all in the same degree of strength, but with more added to them, are within Chirico's own art. "Nulla sine narratione ars", he quoted; and in one of his own self-portraits, he also painted his hands upon a tablet proclaiming "Nulla sine tragoedia gloria". Tragedy, and so glory, are missing elements, not only from a Constable (and, too, from a Courbet, however he touches more of the heart, with the ordered, magical pathos of his realism), but from most of the painting of our times, though not from de Chirico. Six square inches of abstract composition from a corner of a Raphael or a Poussin—that is as much as many of our painters have been pleased with for a picture; a picture *sine narratione, sine tragoedia, sine gloria*. Twenty pictures of his contemporaries might be cut from one such picture of de Chirico's as the "Interno Metafisico" of 1917. The solid base is in de Chirico's early fish, his melons; in his arcades, and green skies and distances, and with it, the poetry, the romance; the *narratio*, the pathos, and then tragedy, the missing tragedy, are in these; they are in these symbols of the world we are given, when there walks into them, or stands in them, the collective man we have made, the prodigal sons, of bent and eyeless head, red thigh, compound of inanimate bits and pieces and mensuration with triangles for hearts; who have been among the swine:

. . . This painter much admired Courbet
 And realism as the guts of lyric
 He much preferred the night to day
 And the far skylines of the metaphysic.
 All this romance, it seems, was past,
 Leaving for us the witless and terrific.

"Without tragedy can be no glory"
 Without a bloody heart, no fertile head,
 No work of art can live without some story,
 No one can love upon an iron and concrete bed.
 Homer and Courbet and de Chirico
 Declaimed reality, the green, the red.

THE HARP OF AEOLUS

Collective man is coloured but lacks eyes:
This man may think about his parents' youth,
May stretch at meaning in the night-green skies,
And see, though fail to catch, the firefly truth:
A triangle for a bloody heart can know
No wrestler's legs, or corn about a Ruth . . .

In the Eblis of *Vathek*, chamber, hall and gallery in boundless gloom and grandeur are "all traversed by persons in search of repose and consolation, but who sought them in vain, for everyone carried within him (visible through the crystal bosom) "a heart tormented in flames". De Chirico's "man" has for heart this triangle, for head a blank, for genitals, smoothness of wood.¹

Such connoisseurs as I have mentioned in England, are content if painters have no intellect (reserving all intellect to writers), so long as the painters can spin out for them delicate harmonies of colour, in which the intelligent feminine patron-critics may find their relaxation and repose, and their images of an aesthetic *schlaraffenland*. A de Chirico is not stupid, has not painted either for art historians (excellent as they are in their hutch) or eunuchs of the spirit. The deification of Constable (or for that matter of many of the virtuosos of the abstract) make it possible to consolidate such tasteful arrogance, and to keep the paintings of a de Chirico face to the wall or wrap curtains around the poems of an Auden. And if one subjects Constable to picture-cleaning, if one wipes off from him the opaque varnishes of sentiment, nationalism, art-history, and exaggeration, and ignorance, until one sees his original, fresh, clean, if limited excellences, alas, then, then one realizes that he was an unwitting ancestor of the witless, of the composite man without eyes, of a dead nature, disgraced by journalism and an easy sentiment, a nature little levied upon for that which it can alone provide of the base of the monumental, the imaginative, tragical, and glorious. De Tocqueville foretold that democracy would "introduce a trading spirit into literature". It has. That in democracies "no longer able to soar to what is great", artists would "cultivate what is pretty and elegant". Indeed they do. "In aristocracies a few great pictures are produced; in democratic countries, a vast number of insignificant ones." I quote that, no more than de Tocqueville wrote it, as an enemy of democracy who would prefer dictatorship. We must make the best of our world. But then there does exist, thinly but nobly populated,

¹ Somewhere, I sometimes think in some human cell left somewhere in the wood and mensuration of de Chirico's dummy, were composed, the fragmentary poems of Mr. T. S. Eliot.

that which Blake called the high rank of art. "What is Grand is necessarily obscure to weak men. That which can be made Explicit to the Idiot is not worth my care. The wisest of the Ancients consider'd what is not too Explicit as the fittest for Instruction, because it rouses the faculties to act." It is because Constable can be made explicit, because he lacks grandeur that, in our day, he is so much aggrandized.

I2

THE DRAWINGS OF HENRY MOORE

HENRY MOORE is now¹ forty-four years old. He was born in Yorkshire, a Yorkshireman, the son of a Yorkshire coalminer, in 1898. So he was sixteen when the Great War began, and he served in his eighteenth and nineteenth years. When he came out of the army he knew what he was going to be. He had intended to become a sculptor ever since childhood; and the first sculptor he heard of was Michelangelo. He had been told Vasari's story of Michelangelo and the head of the Old Fawn, how someone joked that old men usually had a tooth or two missing, and how Michelangelo, who was fourteen, took this earnestly, and at once knocked a stone tooth out of the copy he had made, and tidied up the carving of the mouth and gum. Heard when he was ten or eleven, this story shaped Henry Moore's determination to be a sculptor; and he was also much impressed as a child by the carvings he saw whenever he went into Methley church.

When he was demobilized, then, and went to the Leeds School of Art, in 1919, he clearly, confidently maintained his intention. He soon found himself unsatisfied by the normal academic training in sculpture, and by the classical models which stood round to be drawn and copied. He was lucky: for one thing, in the Leeds Reference Library he came across Roger Fry's book, *Vision and Design*. In this way he first learned of negro and Mexican sculpture. Then students could also go and see Sir Michael Sadler's collection at Leeds, where, for the first time, Moore examined paintings by Gauguin and Van Gogh. Roger Fry's book led him to other books on negro and ancient sculpture of all kinds, and also gave him the clue to the British Museum. Saying that museums or galleries are useless, that they kill pictures or sculpture, is a trick, a snobbish trick, handed down from the rich dilettante of a past age. In museums and galleries, for instance, an artist can pick and choose and defend himself against academies and schools of art. And this is what Henry Moore did in the British Museum, when he came from Leeds to London, to the Royal College of Art. He has never underrated the value of his academic training. He enjoyed drawing and modelling from the life, and he valued the repertory of forms they gave him. But he also

¹ 1943.

wanted to carve. Carving was not encouraged at the R.C.A., but Moore conceived that the real tradition of sculpture enjoined the hard control and the energy of direct carving. He saw this for himself in the sculpture galleries and the heaped-up ethnological glass cases of the British Museum, which were to him what the Gothic sculptures in Westminster Abbey had been to Blake. In the British Museum he spent most of his week-ends during his first half-year in London. Making a selection from the muddle of crowded carvings in the ethnological cases was a critical, enlivening act of self-discovery. Away from the College, Moore had already begun to carve, and he was now beginning to know the more elemental and lively sculpture being made in Europe. In Paris, for example, Brancusi was carving his tense and rather sleek units of life.

The next thing Moore did was to win the R.C.A. travelling scholarship. It took him abroad for six months. Italy has not always had a good effect on English artists, but Moore went there clear in his mind that he was not going to be captured by the Renaissance. He was after the simple, monumental forms of life. He found them, above all, in the remaining chapel of Santa Maria del Carmine at Florence, in the solemn, solid figures grouped on the walls by Masaccio. He made copies from Masaccio. He made it a rite to go to the church for half an hour every day, before doing anything else; and he stood looking at these frescoes, which were more lively and monumental, and assured, and wonderful than anything he had yet seen. Raphael, Michelangelo, and others had gone to the same place, and Vasari wrote: "All the most celebrated sculptors since Masaccio's day have become excellent and illustrious by studying their art in this chapel."

Many other artists have influenced Henry Moore—Giotto, Blake, Turner, Picasso. He has seen many other things, such as the palaeolithic cave paintings in Spain; but he has most of all been moved by these Masaccio figures (which he keeps still in his mind), and by the hard solemnity of Mexican sculpture. The figures of Masaccio and Mexican carvings are in many ways not unlike. In both, detail gives way to monumentality and strength. In both, features are made simple and subordinate. To different ends, both are grand without dictatorial swagger. Both combine deliberation with a held-in immensity of life. That life, that held-in, immense life, is Moore's interest. He is interested in the rounded, solid shapes into which life builds itself. And when he came back from Italy, Moore became a pilgrim also to the Natural History Museum. In the British Museum he had seen the carved symbols of life, in the other he now

saw life in its natural forms and framework, from the cells to the skeleton. Saying "life" we often mean, especially when discussing writing and art, only human life—not human form and movement in opposition to the form and movement of a dog or a fish, but human beings thinking, feeling, desiring, arranging. This is not the life of Moore's sculpture. His beings are not springing and leaping, or else brooding in conscious expression of some ideal. His interest is not for heroes, or harmonious perfection, or gods. In some of his tube-shelter drawings, for instance, his women are tortoise-headed, or pin-headed. They have not the heads of Madonnas, or angels, or a governess by Chardin. Moore has never been attracted by the fag-end of the old ideal values of Renaissance Europe. In art, these values have decayed lingering through the materialisms of the nineteenth century, into a set form. In sculpture, the Renaissance Christ has been smoothed into the plaster Christ of the Catholic church-furnisher (in the Church of England sculptural passion has become taste controlled by diocesan advisory committees); the old ideas of nobility and sacrifice have become a howitzer squatting at Hyde Park Corner like a petrified toad, the hero has become a Cabinet Minister on a pedestal, in bronze boots. What sculpture needed in this country was to be thought out again, or re-explored by feeling. So back to life, or the simple, rounded forms of life. Back to seeing, and being, everything. Back to the Natural History Museum, as well as to Mexican sculpture and Masaccio.

Henry Moore has made several statements about his own carvings in their relation to bones, shells, pebbles, and so on, and also in their relation to the religious carving of the Mexicans, the Sumerians, the Egyptians, and the negroes.

"Primitive art . . . makes a straight-forward statement, its primary concern is with the elemental, and its simplicity comes from direct and strong feeling."

"The most striking quality common to all primitive art is its intense vitality. It is something made by people with a direct and immediate response to life."

"Sumerian sculpture shows a richness of feeling for life and its wonder and mystery."

But remember, when you look at the shapes cut and smoothed by Henry Moore, that these early peoples, in whose carvings the sense of living form was so strong, had an actual pictorial knowledge of life much less detailed and extensive than our own. Much has happened since, in the seventeenth century, van Leeuwenhoek, the amateur

scientist and Dutch draper of Delft, looked through his microscopes, and saw, for the first time in history, bacteria, spermatozoa, and the red corpuscles of the blood. Those early peoples saw life in the form of large organisms, brute or man. We see it also in the plates and diagrams of a biological text-book. Rounded shapes by Moore may be related to a breast, or a pear, or a bone, or a hill, or a pebble shaped among other pebbles on a shingle bar. But they might also relate to the curves of a human embryo, to an ovary, a sac, or to a single-celled primitive organism. Seen with the microscope or revealed by anatomy, such things are included now in our visual knowledge. Art, or the forms of art, change, whether advantageously or not, with such knowledge. In the eighteenth century Stubbs painted an exquisite bunch of flowers held in a woman's hand up to the nostrils of one of his anatomically correct horses. Botanical classification and research and interest in gardening helped to make flowers an especial object under eighteenth-century eyes. An eighteenth-century physiologist investigated the way in which a sunflower follows the sun, therefore Blake and other writers used images about the sunflower. Humphry Davy gave lectures on science; Coleridge went to them to "increase his stock of metaphor". In our age the discovery and study of single-celled organisms has been followed by a search after the units, the source, the primitive form of expression; and no artist can live by himself, or live altogether in, or by, the impressions once vivid in the eyes of a dead generation. So when some critics (critics are very often stuck fast in the record of old impressions) talk persistently of the distorted vision and the disordered mind of contemporary art, one must discover their premises, discover whether they are born of reason or prejudice. They may be simply showing the restriction of their own experience. Academic critics will not be familiar with the cells and organs and elements of life, if they read only Plato and Jane Austen, look only at a lion by Rubens and a lady by Gainsborough. Biology must also be acknowledged; and some of the dislike of those things which painters and sculptors do at the present time certainly does come from this restriction, does come from a narrow, negative sixth-form and university education in the half inhuman humanities. To be interested in life, as Moore is, rather below the conscious level, is not to be sub-human. The rounded limbs of a human foetus, a fertilized egg, or the heart of a water flea, or even the pneumococcus that chokes and ruins lungs with pneumonia, would not, when realized with the bigness of life, be less worthy than a lounge suit in white marble or an Alsatian dog a million times smoothly reproduced in coloured china.

All the same it is not so easy to value Moore's big sense of the wonder and mystery of universal life. When I look at his carvings I sometimes have to reflect that so much of our visual experience of the anatomical details and microscopical forms of life comes to us, not direct, but through the biologist. Microscopical forms are as "big" as any other forms, but the "intense vitality" of primitive art was given to carvings because the carvers had a direct knowledge of animals as vehicles of life, alert, walking, leaping and at rest. I do not say that Moore's pantheism is a motive as exalted as the vision of human life in Raphael's *School of Athens* or Michelangelo's two sonnets—

Heaven-born, the soul a heavenward course must hold;
 Beyond the visible world she soars to seek,
 (For what delights the sense is false and weak)
 Ideal Form, the universal mould,

and so on. Moore's pantheism is not Goethe's or Wordsworth's. Moore does not play up Nature as a beauty. His carvings by no means always reach the grandeur of life. Big without being pompous, the life he carves, you might say, has only the virtue sometimes of not being dead. But that is one virtue up on a lip-service to humanism coupled with a sly and silent support of the robber principles of modern society. Life as life is simply a beginning, an honest beginning, after varieties in European art of decayed idealism, realism, moralism, and pathos hard and soft. And this life is not by any means the whole of Henry Moore's art. The only vision in art, or feeling in art, is an embodied feeling. Let us see how Moore's vision is bodied out in his sculpture and, particularly in his drawings.

II

In Gloucester Cathedral, screens and arches of stone, thrown across the interior, create depth, create ordered images of eternity and infinity. At one place thin stone ribs leap up with superb skill to meet, at a sharp, tense point of spiritual contact, a strut thrusting down from the roof. Here is the builders' intellect brilliantly interpreting the mysteries of religion. In the limestone cliffs of the Gower peninsula, a huge wall, cut through with windows and a door, closes in a narrow, tall cleft, inside which the rock twists into fantastic forms. The rock swirls, and a hollow communicates with another hollow through a deep hole. In the Cathedral, a religious mystery; in the cleft, or cave, a natural mystery, emphasized by man. Come down in scale. Outside the cave there is a beach of pebbles, some of

grey, some of pink limestone, ground into different rounded shapes, cut into with hollows, or pierced with holes. The pebble is a cave in the round, and the pebble and the cleft are types of the art of Henry Moore. Analogies are at once obvious: the darkness of the womb, and shapes swelling and thrusting from it; the bony structure of ribs, the round socket of eyes. Eyes in bone, the heart in bone, the embryo in a nook among bones. Or think of another series, the phallus, the tree, the erect posture of human beings, the standing stones of Avebury, the stone images more precisely carved on the slopes of Easter Island, the tapering of the spire of Salisbury Cathedral, or of an obelisk, or of a peak in the Julian Alps. Anything solid that can show the "wonder and mystery" of life appeals to Henry Moore. But his interest is somewhere above the type, in between the cave (or tube tunnel) and the cathedral, the pebble and the perfect ball, the megalith at Avebury, roughly shaped by the people who put it up, and the cathedral spire. Something still and ordered in the fecundity and muddle of life. His tendency is to humanize rock or wood or bone or geological shape, or biological specimen. That compromise produces some of the most monumental, but also at times some of the least moving of Moore's work. His stony reclining landscape women need to be nearer women, very often, or else further from them; more natural or else more abstract. But his love of the cave and hollow and deep carving gives him room for all kinds of subtlety. His objects of life may be still—a kidney cannot throw a discobolus or hold tables of law—his objects may sprawl, but his scale is always big and he arranges with moving intricacy mass against hollow, hollow against line, and height and breadth. That, after all, is one element by which painting and sculpture have satisfied and delighted human beings all through history and all through changes of style and subject. Compare a tube shelter drawing, for example, the *Four Grey Sleepers*, with Raphael's *Three Graces*. However the two visions differ, the means are exactly the same. In Raphael's three standing figures, the dance of the arms, the heads, the legs, the breasts; in Moore's four sleepers, the solemn, monumental rhythm of the blanket shapes, each stretching outwards from the head, lying like stones on the ground, the rhythm of head against head differently turned, arm against arm, dark depth against depth. Moore has written of the sculptor's need to "think of, and use form in its full spatial completeness". to think of the solid shape "whatever its size, as if he were holding it completely enclosed in the hollow of his hand". And it is necessary, he says, "to feel shape simply as shape, not as description or reminiscence". But he also admits that

forms have their meaning: "rounded forms convey an idea of fruitfulness, maturity". So, like the great inventors, Moore balances his road in between the theorem and the heart. Why else does an early painter set up a crucifix in an agony of rocks and skulls, or a painter of the eighteen-hundreds square up a lime-kiln in a wild valley, or extend the arc of a rainbow across the fertile medley of a landscape? Why else the circle and rectograms of Stonehenge in the desolate spread of Salisbury Plain?

In the mess and muddle and fecundity of life which he finds wonderful and mysterious, Moore puts together shapes by which all that life is both ordered and symbolized.

III

Sculpture is a severe drill for an artist. No man can jot down the sudden illumination, the harmonious, momentary blend of experiences, by the immediate hacking out of a piece of stone. He cannot carve very well from nature. He can do these things in oil paint, easier still in ink or pencil or chalk, or in water-colour. A sculptor can pinch his flash of experience into wax or into clay, but he will not be inclined to do that, if he believes that he must feel in the material he uses, wood or stone. It is better to draw.

"At one time, whenever I made drawings for sculpture, I tried to give them as much the illusion of real sculpture as I could—that is, I drew by the method of illusion, of light falling on a solid object." This stoniness or woodenness of drawing was less alien to the slow carving of the final object than the pinching and dabbing of such an opposite, soft material as clay. Later Moore found it dangerous to make his drawings too much a "substitute for sculpture". The sculpture was "likely to become only a dead realization of the drawing", so he put down his three-dimensional vision on paper without all the three-dimensional illusions. He draws, all the same, "mainly as a help towards making sculpture", tapping himself, in his own words, for the first idea, sorting out ideas, developing them, realizing ideas he hasn't time to realize more solidly, and recording from Nature. But he also admits drawing for the enjoyment of drawing. A sign of the artist with great ability is that he can translate the first recorded flash into the more considered, better ordered perfection of the final painting or the final carving, with the flash undiminished and a strength added to it. Sickert once said, unromantically and truly, that "the sketches of a sketcher are separated by a gulf from those of the painter of pictures". But the ability to draw, to make a

powerful and appealing use of line, always will be a major indication of an artist's rank and vision. Moore is one of the few living artists I know who can scarcely put down a line without giving it life and interest, and a reason for this is that Nature is attractive to him: that he can see into natural objects. Light, for most of us, is the most effective of all black-outs. It reveals so many familiar aspects to us that we cease to notice the rest of the outside world. Moore reminds me of a deep-sea fish found off one of the Dutch spice islands. These fish have head-lamps of luminous bacilli near their eyes, and the light can be shut on and off at will. Moore doesn't just see: he sees in his own light. He sees everything, the scratch on the bone, the curvature of hills, the graining of bark; he sees into qualities and relation of objects, roundness, depth, darkness, surface, colour, solidity, everything, by means of his own light. He can shut his own light off, or, rather, he can turn it inwards, and ponder within himself over the things it has revealed. An artist so thoroughly possessed by vision records something of it simply by making any considered mark on a piece of paper. In the corners and unemphatic parts of the drawings and paintings of such men, when working at their best, there are no strokes or spots, without rhythm, meaning life, and interest. No dullness, nothing emptily and carelessly unrealized. Compare the zig-zagging lines of the floor (any section of it as full as most abstract paintings of our time) and the veining of the right-hand pillars in Raphael's *Fire in the Borgo*.

All this is true of Moore's drawings for sculpture as well as his drawings for drawing, or the enjoyment of drawing. Drawing as an end was somewhat forced upon him, I think, by the war. For one thing, stone cannot be so easily transported, either to his studio, or from his studio to exhibitions. The drawings gained from this. In his earlier, more elaborate drawings in which figures of life establish themselves out of uncertainty and darkness, he had been able to record a whole, more intricate and extensive in scale than can very well be contained in isolated objects of stone. In these drawings the stones have been erect in their setting of landscape and emotion. But they have been drawings in between idea and hard carving. To war-time drawings, such as the *Four Grey Sleepers* again, he has given back some of the stoniness and depth that he had guarded against in drawings meant for sculpture. Here we can thrust the arms of our sight in among forms in an almost "full spatial completeness". Here in these shelter drawings, most of the sculptor and all of the draughtsmen have been at work; and the deep figures in their setting are not just figures of life: they are figures of life (at least, in the tube

series), the wonder of which is terrifically threatened. The figures still belong to the mass of life; they are below the edge of will. Rather than life vertebrate, active and thinking, they are life to which things (terrible things) are being done. Moore was also forced by the subject of the tube shelter and coal-mining drawings nearer to the natural proportions of men and women. This was a gain, just as, under other circumstances, a move away from his stony human compromise towards completer abstraction has also been a gain. In fact, in the drawings of 1942, Moore was moving back towards sculpture and asserting once more that he is not bound to any original. The way Moore develops and changes, moving on from one position to another like this, also proves his curiosity and power. He has been influenced by one thing and another, Masaccio and Mexican sculpture, Picasso and cathedral carvings, the effect of natural forces upon stone, English mediaeval pottery, etc., but he has always kept and developed his own idiom. He has never so far, allowed himself to stick in one phase, or made a habit of repeating himself until style has become a manner. He is always on the move, stalking, at times, towards the explicit.¹

IV

But colour. I have not spoken of Henry Moore's colour, preferring to keep that, a bit artificially, until last. Colour should be, and certainly is with Moore, an extension of drawing. Just as an artist of vision cannot often record a stroke without quality, so he cannot keep feeling and experience, and himself, out of his intimations of tone and colour. A clear way of describing the relation and dance of colour has never been worked out, I suppose partly because we inherit the notion that colour is sensuality and pomp and vanity, and not a first thing to be considered in the putting together and ordering of a picture. But colour has regained honour with us since the eighteenth century. Then, when mathematics and order were the prime interests, colours were subdued and browns and greys had their day. The university don, as often, years behind the time, wrote in 1817: "the delightful green of Nature cannot be represented in a picture. . . . Nature must be stripped of her green livery, and dressed in the browns of the painters, or confined to her own autumnal tints, in order to be transferred to the canvas". But when reason, or the conduct of human understanding, began to give way to enthusiasm and spontaneity, when mathematical began to give way to natural

¹ Since I wrote this the most explicit of Moore's carvings has been his *Madonna and Child*, for St. Matthew's Church, Northampton, of which one can say "This is what Moore feels, this also is what Moore thinks."

sciences, when light began to shine, colour, and, in particular, water-colour, with its scope, vividness and speed, began to come in, with the injunction to honour originality, the first idea, and Nature. First colour comes in flatly, clearly, and thinly, as a combination of smooth tints. Think of Rowlandson or Stubbs. In various degrees colour then was an adjunct of drawing. It gains richness and sparkle, developing into a medium. Think of taffeta in Reynolds (whose drawing, it was said, lay under his paint) or in Gainsborough. Think of colour in such poets as Mickle or Chatterton:

The yellow broom, where chirp the linnets gay,
Waves round the cave; and to the blue-streaked skyes
A shattered rock towres up in fragments gray.

In much of the most balanced or most natural painting of romantic landscape, for example, in the church walls and windows of Cotman, the water-colours of Turner, the open and shut weather of Constable, colour, as a record of personal exuberance, strikes a bargain with colour as a record of Nature. But in a really good water-colour by Cotman, for example, the colours have their exquisite relation to each other, their quality, and their character as drawing. No point or patch of colour is without the interest of personal quality. The colours also fulfil the subject in a harmony of feeling. Later on, for example, in some Preraphaelite painting, this agreement and harmony disappear. You get, say, three pictures in one, a subject without true relation to its drawing, and drawing and subject without true relation to the colours, which are there simply as an accurate transcript. The lovely effectiveness of colour in drawings by Henry Moore is much fed, of course, from his appetite for the colours, in nature, the lichen on the grey rock, the coloured texture of weather-worn stone, the fiery black and red of igneous formations or burning coal, and so on. But because he is so much free of having to say yes to objects, so he is more or less free of having to bargain with the colour of objects. His objects, his line, his ordering, freely represent his vision of life; by his colours he is freely represented as well. So in English art his nearer relations are not Cotman or Constable, so much as Blake and James Ward and Turner. He admires James Ward's *Bull* and *Gordale Scar*. He admires Turner for his bigness and energy, and as a painter of coloured abstraction, and tornado, and water-spout. Moore's colour, as in Blake's *Newton*, is a free, personal, expressive colour; which also helps and fills out the design. And Blake stands near the beginning of a process working down to de Chirico and Wyndham Lewis, and Moore himself, a process which

comes at last to a personal freedom of colour in an art which is, or nearly is, abstract.

In some coloured drawings by Moore I feel the colour as a bait to the eye, a very attractive bait, icing, cherries and angelica on shapes for sculpture. But his deepest drawings are right, and full of surprise, in their colour, which speaks as an indivisible part of the total effect, the total meaning, his entire view of the "wonder and mystery" of life. Most of his drawings may simply be for sculpture; but I am not sure, much as he will dislike the idea, that Moore's claim on us does not really derive from the freedom and big splendour of his best drawings as much as from most pieces of stone and wood that he has carved. But there would be no drawings without the carving, no carvings without the drawing.

There is a statement I quote once again, which fits the work of Henry Moore:

Nature is played out as a Beauty, but not as a Mystery . . . I don't want to see the original realities—as optical effects, that is. I want to see the deeper reality underlying the scenic, the expression of what are sometimes called abstract imaginings.

And it was made, you will recollect, by Thomas Hardy many years ago.

13

HOW MUCH ME NOW YOUR ACROBATICS AMAZE

*Whoever has the power of creating, has likewise
the inferior power of keeping his creation in order.*

W. S. LANDOR.

SUPPOSE one were compelled to decide between "reason" and "romance": it is, surely, no more the reason of 1700 that one would choose than the romance of 1800 one would easily reject. "Romance" is too simple a pejorative. In the eighteenth century one could be "romantic" under reason, and in the nineteenth century one could be rational under romance. The "romance" we are drifting back to in England is a romance without reason: it is altogether self-indulgent and liquescent. An Inky Cap mushroom grows up white and firm and then flops down into a mess of ink—which is our new romance, something once alive which avoids no longer the decay into death. It is so much easier to flop, so much easier to give up the metabolism of life and literature, in a time which is contemptuous of law, and when there is no body of opinion at all clear about what is true and untrue, possible and impossible, probable and improbable. And so now a poet (Mr. George Barker) can fill nine-tenths of a book with such lines as:

O dolphins of my delight I fed with crumbs
Gambading through bright hoops of days,
How much me now your acrobatics amaze
Leaping my one-time ecstasies from Doldrums . . .

and another (Mr. Stephen Spender) declare

And there was many another name
Dividing the sun's light like a prism
With the rainbow colours of an "ism"

—not only without critical eyebrow-raising, but with the evocation of the highest praise. If, in the most public way possible, in some periodical of the widest circulation and the highest repute, one were to examine such poetry, turn it inside out, expatiate with the greatest clarity and skill on the nature of poetry and its function in life, prove

the awkwardness, limpness, and absurdity of these crumb-fed dolphins, nothing would happen, no one would notice. Objection, reason, proof—all would be swamped and swallowed in the universal mess.

Thinking of some of Gerard Hopkins's strictures on Browning, I have collected a number of pieces from another book of recent poems, full of lions and amber and dust and dew:

1. . . . bird-blood leaps within our veins
And is changed to emeralds like the sap in the grass.
2. And you are the sound of the growth of spring in the heart's
deep core.
3. And I would that each hair on my head was an angel
O my red Adam.
4. O heed him not, my dew with golden feet
Flying from me.
5. But the sap in these dry veins sang like a bird:
"I was the sea that knew the siren song
And my veins heard
A planet singing in the Dorian mode . . ."
6. Another old man said:
"I was a great gold-sinewed King, I had a lion's mane
Like the raging sun . . ."
7. Were those the veins that heard the Siren's song?
8. So changed is she by Time's appalling night
That even her bone can no more stand upright.
9. . . . but the long wounds torn by Time in the golden cheek
Seem the horizons of the endless cold.
10. . . . and the first soundless wrinkles fall like snow
On many a golden cheek
11. The kiss that holds . . . the rose that weeps in the blood.
12. But now only the red clover
lies over the breath of the lion and the mouth of the lover.

All these—it is Hopkins's phrase—are frigidities, all of them untruths to nature, the emerald blood jumping in the veins, the angelic coiffure, dew with feet, veins with ears, sinews made of gold, cheek wounds like landscapes, wrinkles falling like snow, the rose weeping in the veins, the earth and plants on top of the dead lion's breath—all frigidities except 2 and 8 (heart's deep core—heart's deep heart), which are specimens of the undiluted art of sinking. The poetry they come from is chimerical. The chimera has a lion's head, a goat's

HOW MUCH ME NOW YOUR ACROBATICS AMAZE
body, and a serpent's tail. The lion's head is a lion no longer real (as
the lions of Dryden were real:

And still for him the Lioness stalks
And hunts her lover through the lonely walks).

The goat's body (and hair) is the absence of form; the serpent's tail the lines elongating into nothingness. Gerard Hopkins found it monstrous (his word once more, and I am speaking of the chimerical)—monstrous in Browning's *Instans Tyrannus*, that the sky was written of as a shield protecting the just man from the tyrant—"The vault of heaven is a vault, hollow, concave towards us, convex upwards; it therefore could only defend man on earth against enemies above it; an angry Olympus for instance." He held that Browning had "all the gifts but the one needful and the pearls without the string; rather, one should say raw nuggets and rough diamonds". His turning of concave into convex was a "frigidity", an "untruth to nature". It came of "frigid fancy with no imagination"; and frigid fancy describes the gilded stringless writing from which I have panned these dozen samples, writing of an order lower than that of Browning, and more full of untruths to nature.

Two signs of our drift into "romance" are the writing of such poetry, and the reception of it. The reception of these poems has been marked with the epithets of greatness in a hallelujah of reviews. If the poet (who is Miss Sitwell) adds to the reassembly, to the reiteration of the great truisms of life and time and youth and age and decay and death, to the repetition of adjectives (golden, etc.) no longer valid for our sense of wonder, she has added nothing from nature. In fact, it is the ubiquitous confidence of the day that anything, any first impression, can be crammed into formless verse without the self-discipline and self-criticism which are the sources of form; the sources of that composition in which, Henry James declared, exists the "principle of health and safety". And that, exactly, is where our new "romance", in all its guises, is decadent and different to, shall one say, the romance of Coleridge. It is dragging the past for verbiage, for words out of their setting, nature not at all, and the self for disorderly nonsense. Coleridge was a scientifically-minded poet, curious about self, the past, and the given nature around him. If the glitter and the excellence of a phenomenon in nature appealed to him, he did not crawl like a spaniel to its charm or mystery. He had seen, for example, the Glory, described in the *Memoirs of the Literary and Philosophical Society of Manchester*, in 1790, by a Fellow of the Royal Society. The Glory is the rainbow

THE HARP OF AEOLUS

which surrounds the shadow of your head upon mist when the mist is in the right place below you, and the sun in the right place behind you. But instead of using the Glory as an ornament (as I have explained in writing of the Aeolian Harp), Coleridge used it in *Dejection*, and again in *Constancy to an Ideal Object*, to express his deepest exploration into the relation of man to nature:

... would we aught behold of higher worth,
Than that inanimate cold world, allow'd
To the poor, loveless, ever-anxious crowd,
Ah! from the soul itself must issue forth
A light, a glory, a fair luminous cloud
Enveloping the earth—
And from the soul itself must there be sent
A sweet and potent voice of its own birth.

Nature to Coleridge and Wordsworth, as romantics, may have been very different to nature as uniformity and commonsense for Dryden and for Pope. For an image, Dryden and Pope might never have used a phenomenon such as the Glory, so much outside the general experience of mankind. Yet even if Coleridge was a poet of the age of spontaneity and of expression of the individual self, his intellect never abdicated; he was born in the eighteenth century, he lived within the influence of its controls. Even if he drugged himself with opium, he only published *Kubla Khan*, it is at least worth recalling now, at someone else's request, "and, as far as the Author's own opinions are concerned, rather as a psychological curiosity, than on the ground of any supposed *poetic* merits". "Psychological curiosity": this is perhaps the point for reminding oneself of Mr. Dylan Thomas, who has become one of the "greater" poets of our grey time, and before whom (so much have things changed since Sir John Squire greeted *The Waste Land* with "a grunt would serve equally well") even the conventional critics have begun abasing themselves. Mr. Eliot's poems have their seldom-mentioned shortcomings, as of some half-man who has escaped with a few guarded fragments of humanity, or divinity, from what Mr. Edward Dahlberg has called "the most clinkered land in the world for the artist to live in"; but one would not name Mr. Eliot's poems "psychological curiosities". Mr. Eliot's poems live tightly above the waist—rather higher than that, above the heart; Mr. Thomas's live, sprawl loosely, below the waist. Mr. Eliot is a reasoning creature. The self in Mr. Thomas's poem seems inhuman and glandular. Or rather like water and mud and fumes mixed in a volcanic mud-hole, in a young land. Those who

HOW MUCH ME NOW YOUR ACROBATICS AMAZE
admire his poems, one concludes, are fascinated because there is something primal and universal in the underground fury by which they are generated; but not to worry the metaphor too far, one would prefer a man's poetry to break out of the common fury at least like a geyser, at least with the force and cleanness of form at least with the meaning of a pillar; and not with the meaningless hot sprawl of mud.

Mr. Thomas is a poet, Miss Edith Sitwell has remarked, whose work is "on a huge scale both in theme and structurally". She must imply, not just that his poems are about birth, death and love, in his newest book, but that Mr. Thomas says something about his theme, says something on a *huge* scale, and by "huge" again Miss Sitwell must imply a scale of meditation equal to Wordsworth's in *The Prelude*, Blake's upon the contrary states of the human soul, Shakespeare's in *The Tempest*, or Goethe's in *Faust*. One cannot demolish Mr. Thomas's poems by demolishing Miss Sitwell's critical discernment; but one can say that even Mr. Thomas's most recent book, *Deaths and Entrances*, shows, not a theme, not meditation, but simply obsession;—obsession with birth, death, and love, and obsession mainly in a muddle of images with only the frailest ineptitude of structure. Rhyme schemes begin and break. Rhythms start off and falter, into incoherent prose. Image repeats image, in a tautology of meaning. If a poet rhymes, he must twist his rhymes to the exigencies of impulse, or illumination; not, as Mr. Thomas very often does, twist, and so falsify, his illumination to the exigencies of rhyme. And when he determines to keep his purpose, being too unskilful in words, he nearly-rhymes. Near rhymes have their virtue, but only if they come as deliberately as true rhyme, and have, against each other, the proper weight, accent, and length; but Mr. Thomas's ineptitude licenses him to write

Lie still, sleep becalmed, sufferer with the *wound*
In the throat, burning and turning. All night *afloat*
On the silent sea we have heard the *sound*
That came from the wound wrapped in the salt *sheet*.

Afloat-sheet is Mr. Thomas's skill. Here, too, is Mr. Thomas faltering into prose (though perhaps one should characterize his poems as attempts to falter out of prose): Some movement begins:

Friend by enemy I call you out.

You with a bad coin in your socket,

You my friend there with a winning air

—then smash:

THE HARP OF AEOLUS

Who palmed the lie on me when you looked
Brassily at my shyest secret.

To display most kinds of Mr. Thomas's formal awkwardness, it would be most fair to read through a short poem, since in three stanzas the difficulties of form are easier to resolve (and in this poem, *On a Wedding Anniversary*, see again the rhythm smashed in the third line):

The sky is torn across
This ragged anniversary of two
Who moved for three years in tune
Down the long walks of their vows.
Now their love lies a loss
And Love and his patients roar on a chain;
From every true or crater
Carrying cloud, Death strikes their house.
Too late in the wrong rain
They come together whom their love parted:
The windows pour into their heart
And the doors burn in their brain.

Clouds with craters are like veins with ears; more ridiculous, in fact, than Nat Lee's night-raven with huge wicker wings, and strange eyes: "In each black Eye there rolls a Pound of Jet." Syntactically Mr. Thomas makes wonders of awkwardness; not, one feels, from theory, but because his words are nearly automatic, his words come up bubbling in an automatic muddle.

Never until the mankind making
Bird beast and flower
Fathering and all humbling darkness
Tells with silence the last light breaking
And the still hour
Is come of the sea tumbling in harness

—construable—just, but made none the more active or effective by the confusion (or by *darkness: harness*).

No more, no less construable is:

There was a saviour
In the churches of his tears
There was calm to be done in his safe unrest
Children kept from the sun
On to the ground when a man has died

HOW MUCH ME NOW YOUR ACROBATICS AMAZE

To hear the golden note turn in a groove,
 Silence, silence to do, when earth grew loud
 In the jails and studies of his keyless smiles

—a stanza upon which Mr. Thomas's explorers and admirers should meditate, for reasons which I shall give later. And like a child, learning to talk, or a journalist, Mr. Thomas deals in the striking, but rootless image, and in the cliché turned—*once below a time, all the sun long, happy as the heart was long—a bad coin in your socket*; word-tumbling without either gravity of point, or point of fun (as when Lewis Carroll writes "Either you or your head must be off, and that in about half no time.")

Mr. Thomas does indeed work, as a child works, towards form and coherence. From the shape of one poem he must have been *looking* at George Herbert. But otherwise his poetry as near as may be is the poetry of a child, volcanic, and unreasoning, who has seldom read, and little cared for, the poets of his own language, and allowed them little power over his own manipulation—or rather automatism:

How soon the servant sun
 (Sir morrow mark)
 Can time unriddle, and the cupboard store
 (Fog has a bone
 He'll trumpet into meat)
 Unshelve that all my gristles have a gown
 And the naked egg stand strange . . .

The power which these poems appear to exercise over readers does not reside in sense, demonstrably; it does not reside in music, it does not reside in an ordered, musical non-sense. The unit, one realizes, in Mr. Thomas's poetry, is neither poem, nor stanza, it is phrase or line, which by accident suggests the next phrase, or the next line, the sopisist image which suggests the next solipsism; power resides in the novel suggestion, in these massed solipsisms, of the strange, the magical, the profound; and in fact their strangeness is little else than the strangeness of Mr. Thomas, their profundity little beyond the Indian-ink deepnesses of an individual, their magic little else than what appears to be a black magic. (Here perhaps I should interpolate that the second, just-construable piece which I quoted from Mr. Thomas, is one made up by myself of disconnected lines from three stanzas of one poem. But between, then and now, I hope any idolater will have taken his time to admire it, and to meditate upon it; for it reads, I am convinced, as authentically as most of Mr. Thomas's stanzas.)

Mr. Thomas, as I say, cannot help what bubbles into him and bubbles out; but to invest these black magical bubbings, as critics feel them to be, with greatness,—in spite of here and there a fancy, even a “sublime” fancy (though often it is “the sublime dashed in pieces by cutting too close with the fiery four-in-hand round the corner of nonsense”), here and there even a poem—to do that deserves many descriptions, of which I will mention only one, that it seems a little out of date. The “new romanticism”, of which Mr. Dylan Thomas’s poetry is the exemplar, became articulate and “new” some twenty years ago in the hey-day of *Transition*; and as Mr. Wyndham Lewis made plain in attacking *Transition* in *The Diabolical Principle*, it was not new even then. Muddled up with politics, the “new romanticism” of *Transition* was based considerably upon Lautréamont, whose diabolism, minus the politics (and minus a clear sense of the devil, and minus the will to be devilish) soaked into Mr. Dylan Thomas in his Welsh childhood. “That this bric-à-brac,” wrote Mr. Lewis of Lautréamont, “should be seriously presented as the exemplar of the best or newest seems impossible. That it should be . . . published to catch *l’homme moyen sensuel*, on account of its blood-dripping fangs associated with the milk-white bodies of virgins, is as natural and harmless as that *Fanny Hill* should never be quite out of print, or that the *History of a Flea* or even the ‘bourgeois’ pornography of Paul de Kock’s *Ten Pairs of Drawers* should remain scandalous best-sellers. But there, you would suppose, the joke would end—once the gull’s money was safely transferred from his bank to that of the sagacious . . . literary publisher. . . . But that is not the case.” Mr. Thomas once defined his notion of poetry: “Whatever is hidden should be made naked. To be stripped of darkness is to be clean, to strip of darkness is to make clean. Poetry, recording the stripping of individual darkness must, inevitably, cast light upon what has been hidden for too long, and by so doing make clean the naked exposure.” “Whatever is hidden . . .” It suggests the disinfection of psychological ordure—as if, in Ananda Coomaraswamy’s words, “as if the artist had nothing better to do than make an exhibition of himself to his neighbour”. And what self-adulation, what absence of humility, what insolence (even if Mr. Thomas is not altogether to be blamed for it), to believe in the importance to others of the stripping of one’s own dirty, individual darkness, which must be made clean! Art, yes, as the peeling off of the ten pairs of drawers!

Yesterday’s heresy has become with the middlemen, and *les hommes moyen sensuels*, to-day’s provincial orthodoxy. The poetry of

HOW MUCH ME NOW YOUR ACROBATICS AMAZE
the unpeeled drawers is now acceptable. But we should take care. What I believe should be our concern in all this war and post-war drift back into a decayed romance is not; first of all, to use "romance" pejoratively because of any such examples, not to throw away everything that genuine "romance", everything that poets and artists, everything that psychologists from Coleridge to Freud, everything that anthropologists have curiously revealed about the source and nature of the arts. Dryden's poetry, and Poussin's painting (even if one does not need to underwrite all the views of Dryden's age or Poussin's age about nature and reason), are always there, as models of control. It is ironic to think that we can once more read Boileau with profit; that Boileau at whom Keats had to make a long nose:

A Poem, where we all perfections find,
Is not the work of a Fantastick mind:
There must be Care, and Time, and Skill, and Pains;
Not the first heat of unexperienc'd Brains.
Yet sometimes Artless Poets, when the rage
Of a warm Fancy does their minds ingage,
Puff'd with vain pride, presume they understand,
And boldly take the Trumpet in their hand;
Their Fustian Muse each accident confound;
Nor can she fly, but rise by leaps and bounds,
Till their small stock of learning quickly spent
Their poem dyes for want of nourishment.
With impudence the Laurel they invade
Resolv'd to like the Monsters they have made.

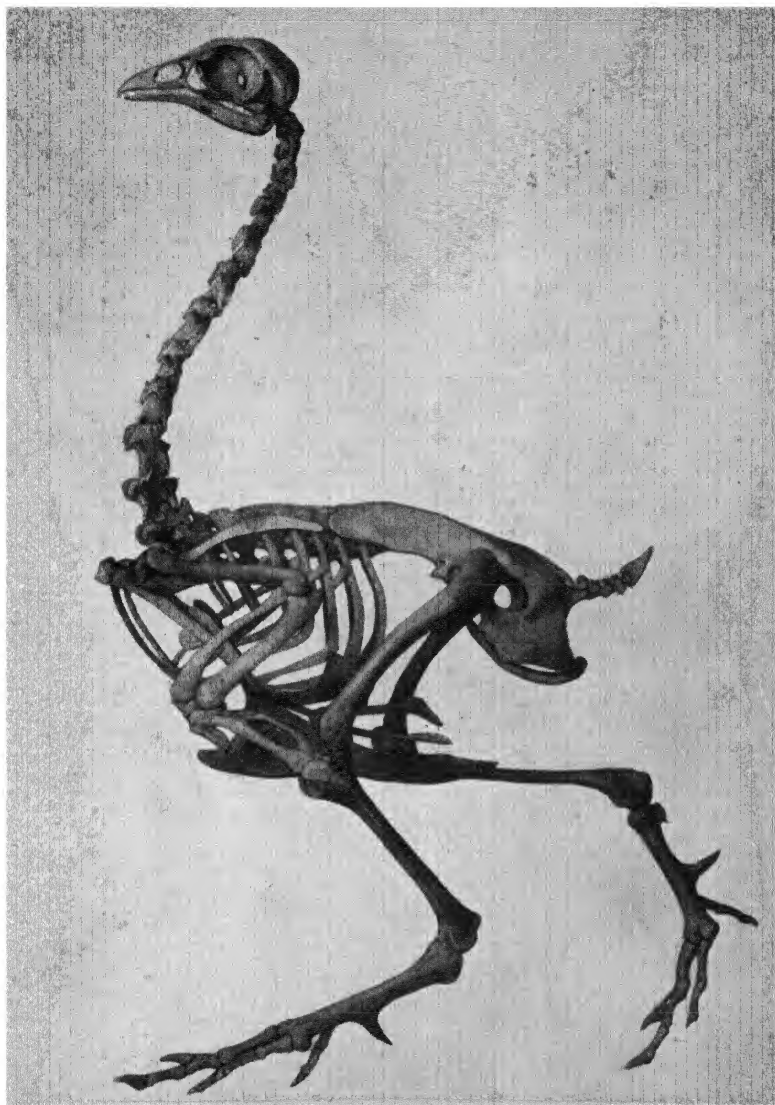
But still, as I say, we do not want to throw away the discoveries of the last hundred and fifty years, or the last forty years, we do not want to waste them because so many writers and artists, and so many critics, now are debasing themselves to a new exclusive set of dogmas derived from the very things discovered. Art—being an artist—is subject to entropy; or is a perpetual walking across a tight rope, with death and disaster either side and below. And the Enlightenment of Dryden and Pope tailed off, too, by making reason's light a dogma when nothing was left to enlighten.

No one has added up and analysed the whole romantic slide with more skill and more power, than W. H. Auden, in an essay, *Criticism in a Mass Society*, which was little noticed in the England of neo-romance. To the critic, he wrote "Slogans like Art for Art's sake, or Art for Politic's sake, will be equally objectionable." The critic "will flatter neither the masses by assuring them that what is popular must

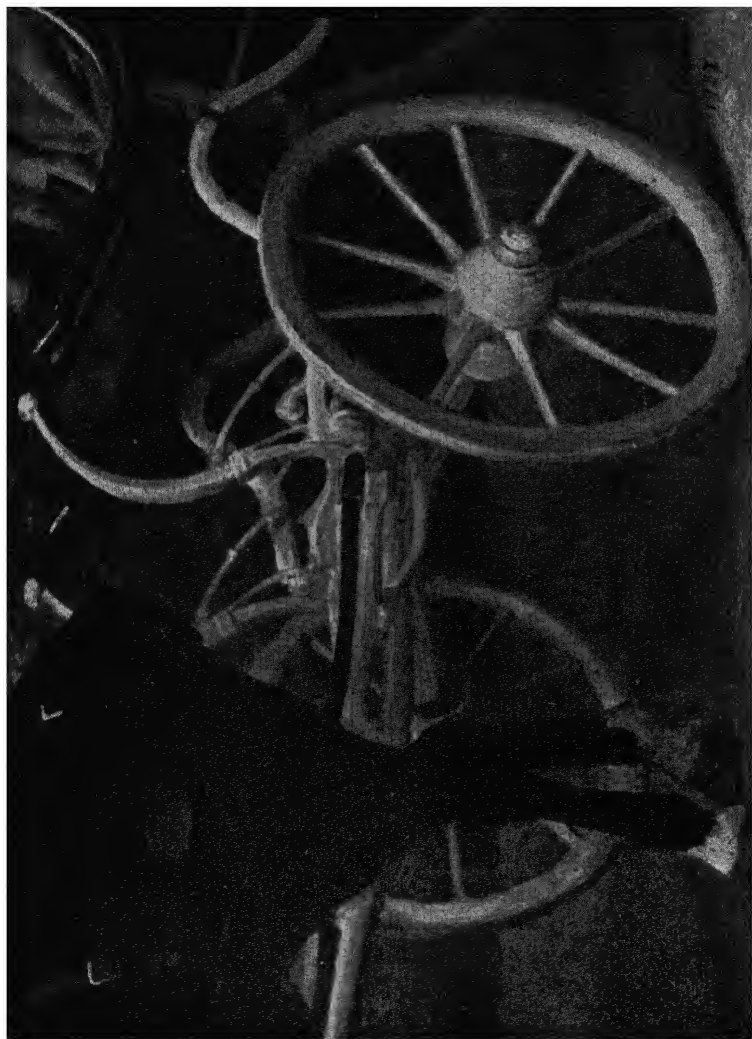
be good, nor the highbrows by assuring them that what is *avantgarde* must be superior. Further, he will conceive of art, like life, as being a self-discipline rather than a self-expression . . . he will distrust the formless, the expansive, the unfinished, and the casual."

But in combatting the slide into romance, into idiot romance, we have to be careful not to encourage the white and dry which sterilize the creative impulse. Even that danger does not mean that we should be afraid to recover our wits and our honesty, and speak out now and then, afraid because we may seem to be betraying a cause to the old enemy, and assuring Sir John Squire, or whoever carries his mantle in these later years, that he was right.

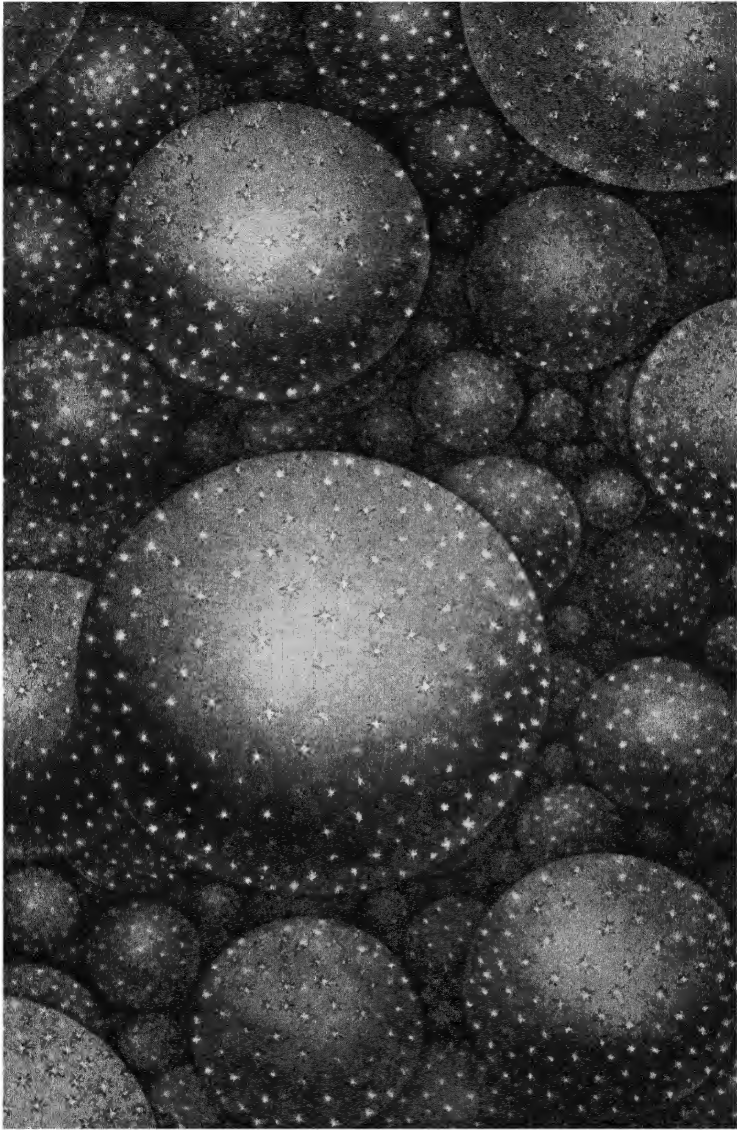
Postscript: As I read this in proof, I discover that Mr. Thomas has also published a recipe for the writing of his poems: "I let an image be made from my subconscious, and from that first image I let"—this is peculiar—"its opposite emerge. These two images then war with each other, producing a third; the poem becoming a water-tight column of images." Wyndham Lewis once defined art as "a constant stronghold of the purest human *consciousness*." This definition of Mr. Thomas's is making art the constant stronghold of certainly not the purest (since purity implies sifting and discernment) human, or sub-human, subconsciousness.



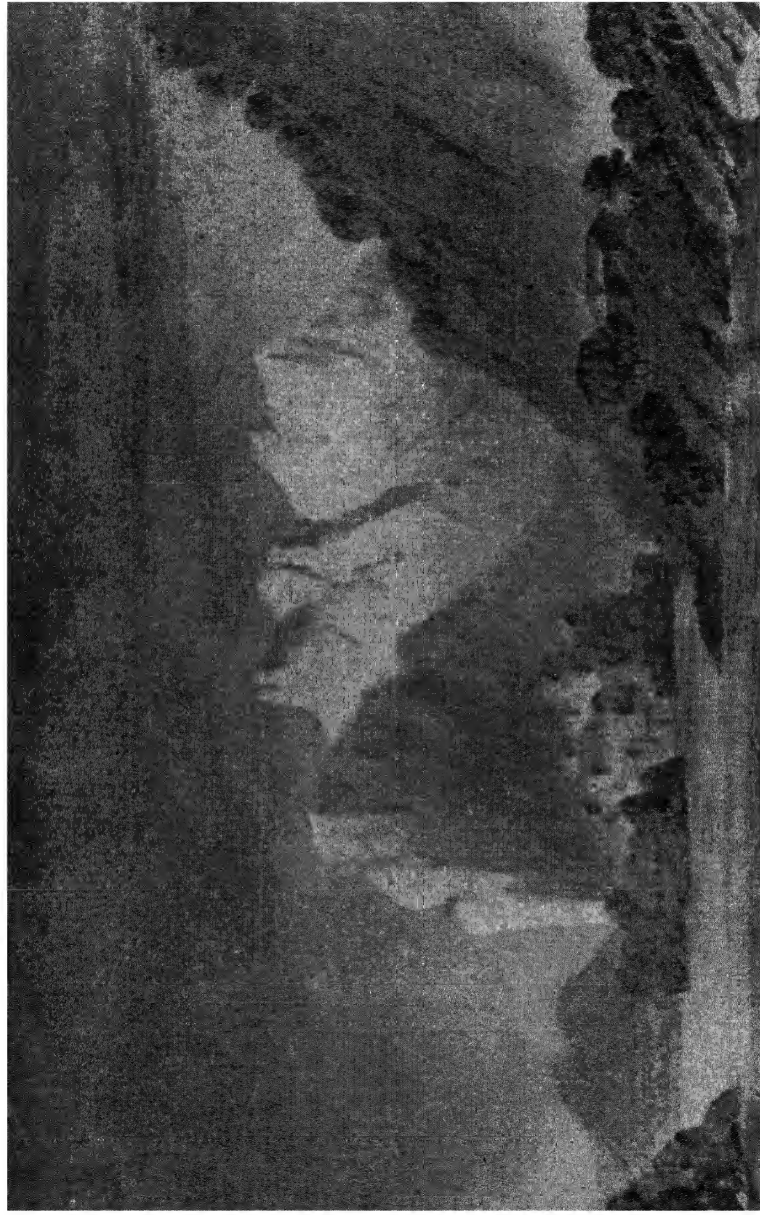
I. GEORGE STUBBS. Skeleton of a Hen. Stipple engraving. 1804, from "The Comparative Anatomical Exposition of the Structure of the Human Body, with that of a Tiger and a Common Fowl".



2. GEORGE STUBBS. Detail from "The Phaeton". (*National Gallery.*)



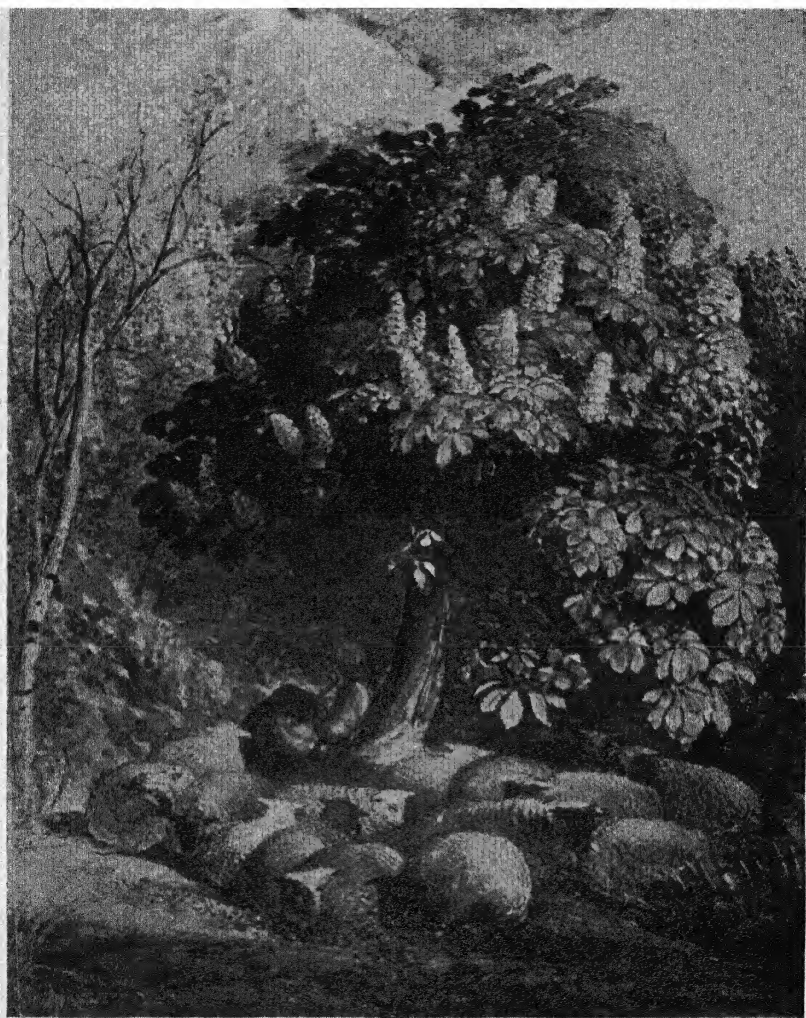
3. (Artist Unknown). A Plurality of Worlds, mezzotint, from Thomas Wright's "An Original Theory of the Universe, 1750".



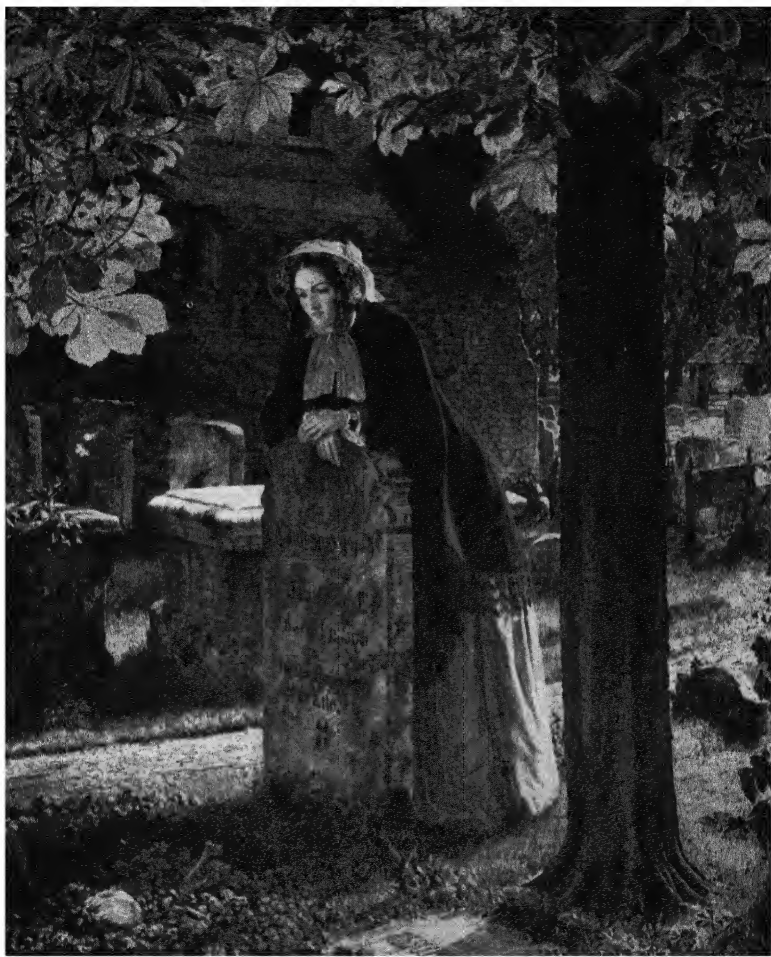
4. ALEXANDER COZENS On the Rhone. c. 1746 (?). Washes on varnished paper. 7 × 11½ inches. (*T. Girin Collection*).



5. J. R. COZENS. Valley with Winding Streams. 1778. Watercolour. $14\frac{5}{8} \times 20\frac{1}{8}$ inches. (Victoria & Albert Museum.)



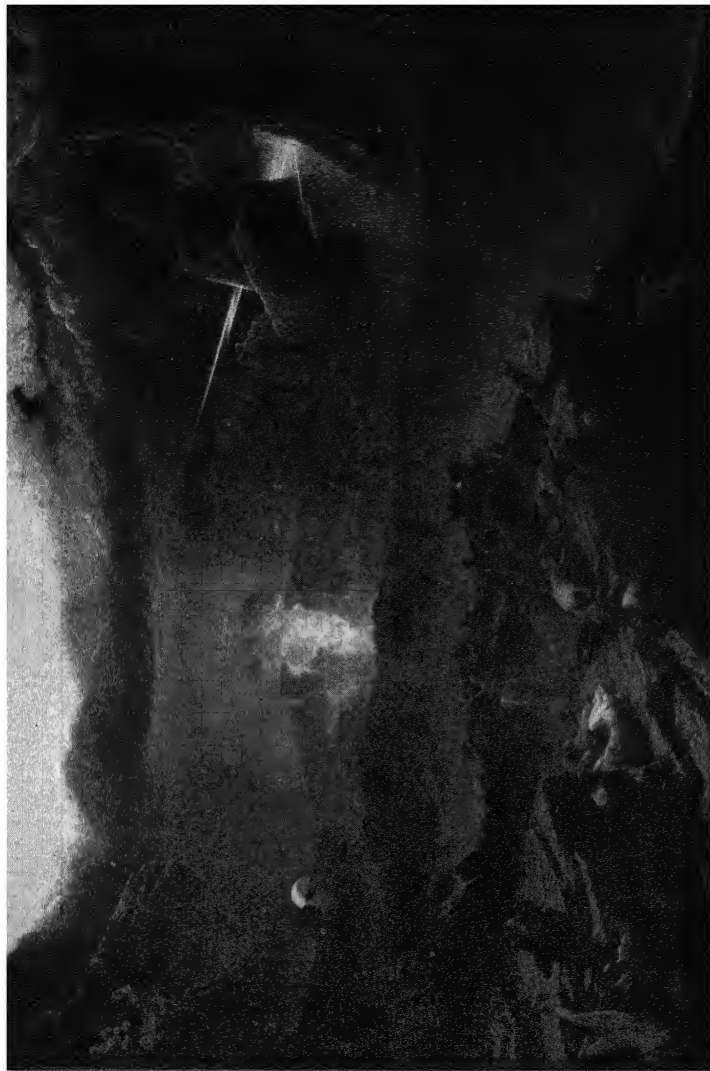
6. SAMUEL PALMER. Pastoral with Horse-Chestnut. c. 1831-32. Watercolour.
 $13 \times 10 \frac{5}{16}$ inches. (*Ashmolean Museum.*)



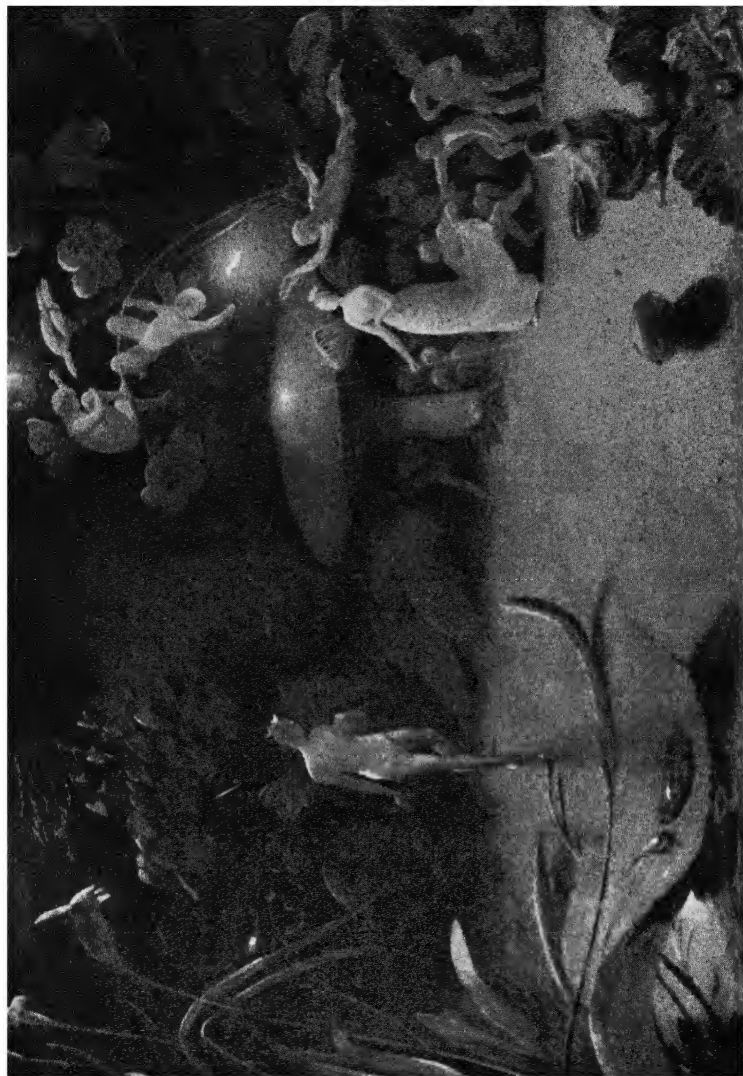
7. H. A. BOWLFER. The Doubt : Can These Dry Bones Live ? 1855. Oil.
24 x 20 inches. (*Tate Gallery.*)



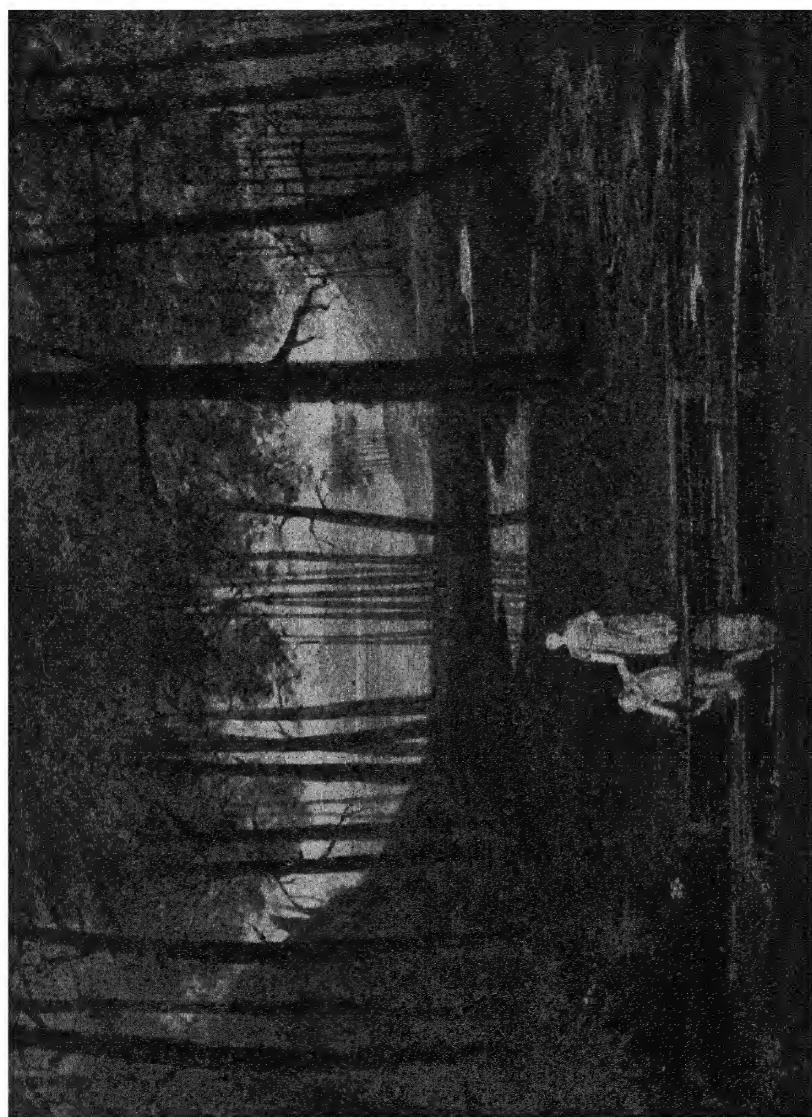
8. FRANCIS DANBY. *Disappointed Love*. 1821. Oil. $24\frac{3}{4} \times 32$ inches. (*Victoria & Albert Museum.*)



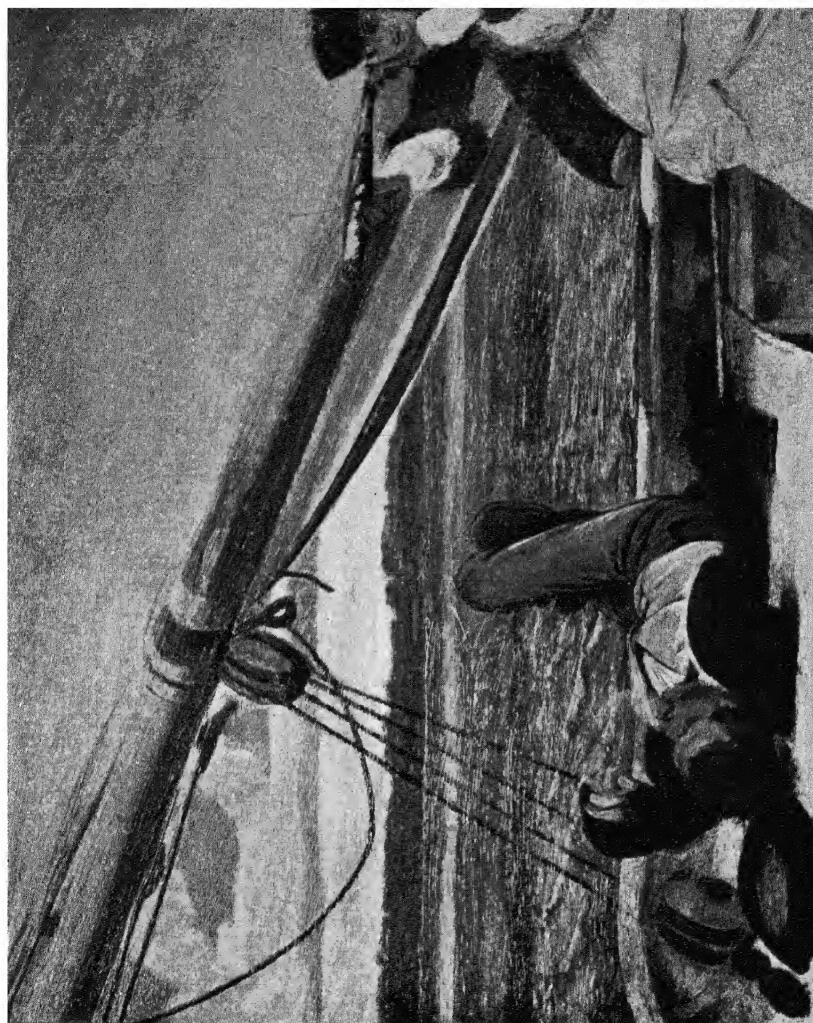
9. FRANCIS DANBY. *The Opening of the Sixth Seal*, 1828 Oil. 73 100 $\frac{1}{2}$ inches (*National Gallery, Dublin.*)

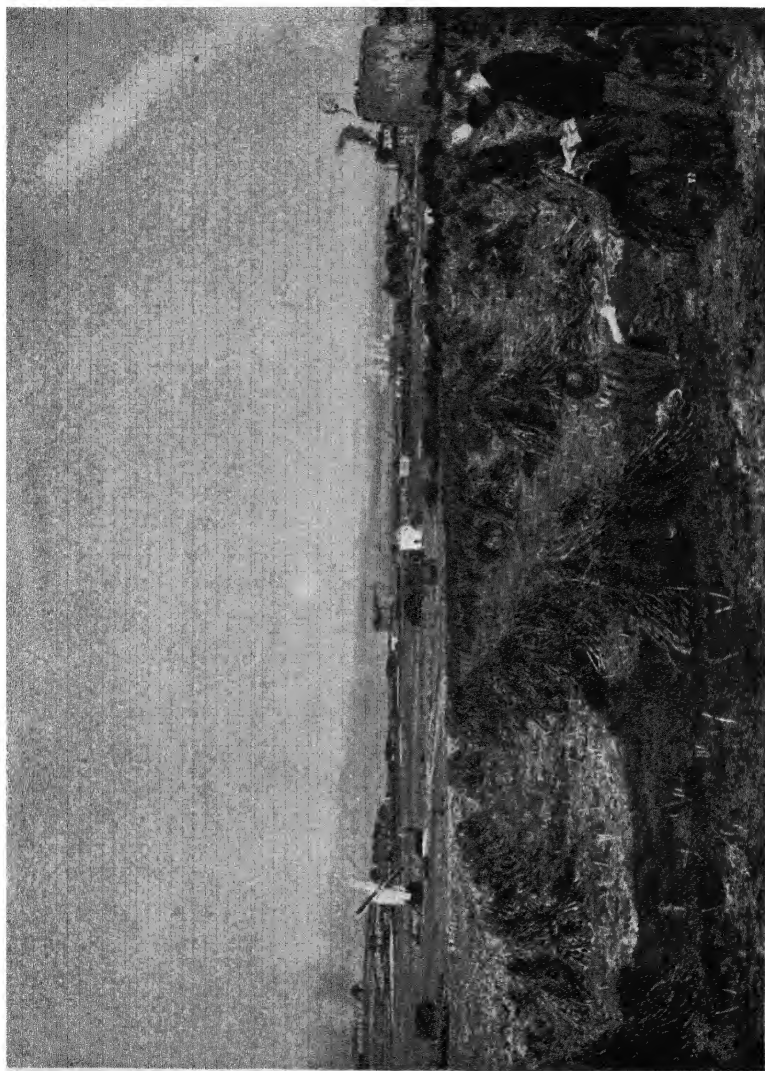


10. FRANCIS DANBY. Scene from "A Midsummer Night's Dream". Watercolour. $7\frac{1}{2} \times 11$ inches.
(*Oldham Art Gallery.*)









14. FORD MADDOX BROWN. Walton on the Naze. 1860. Oil. $12\frac{1}{2} \times 16\frac{1}{2}$ inches. (Birmingham Art Gallery.)



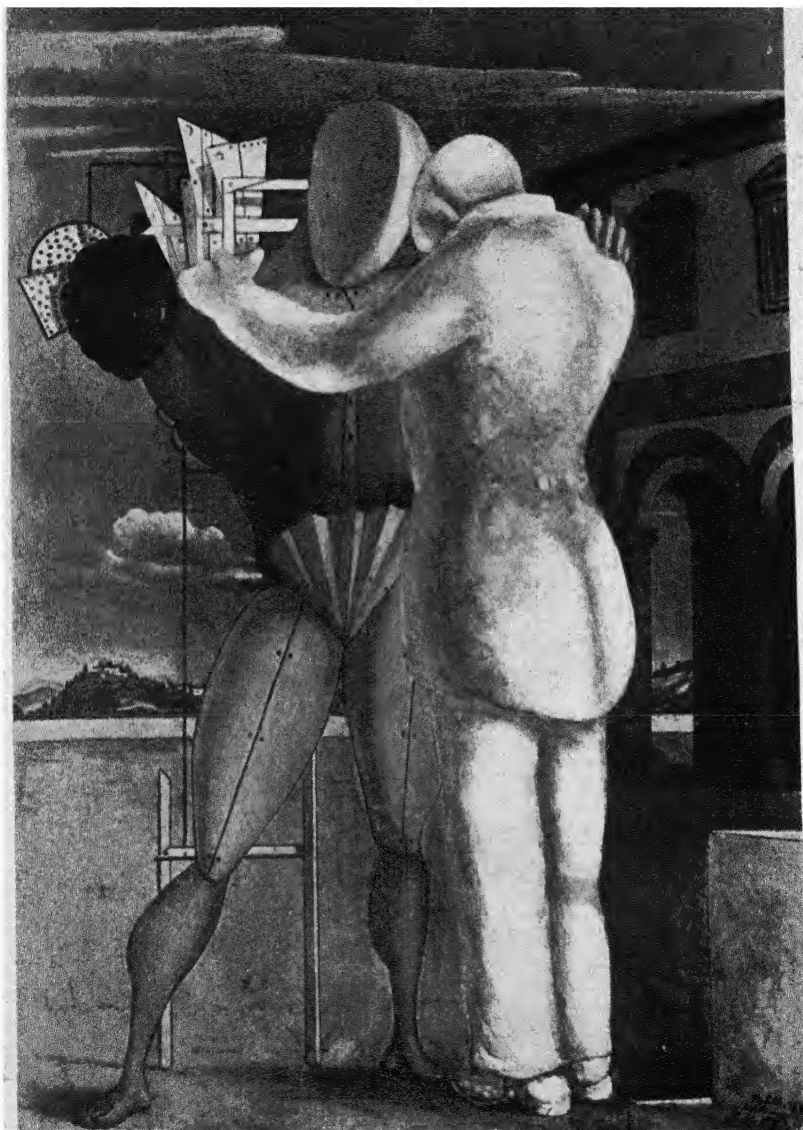
15. JOHN CONSTABLE. Hadleigh Castle. c. 1828. Oil. $48\frac{1}{2} \times 66$ inches. (*National Gallery.*)



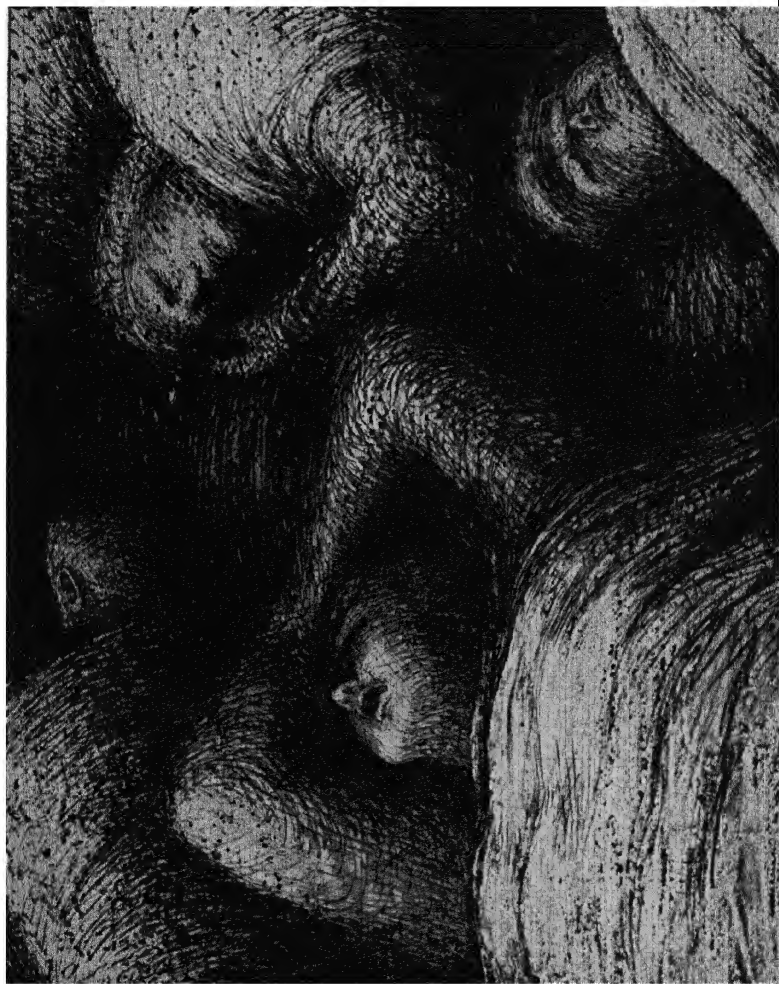
16. MARY CASSATT. Femme Assise, Vue de Dos et Enfant. Oil. (Louvre.)



17. GUSTAVE COURBET. In The Forest. Oil. (*Tate Gallery.*)



18. GIORGIO DE CHIRICO. *Il Ritorno del Figliuol Prodigo*. Oil. 87 × 59 cm.
(*Private Collection, Milan.*)



19. HENRY MOORE. Four Grey Sleepers. 1941. Wash and Pen. 20 x 17 inches.. (*Imperial War*



20. HENRY MOORE. Three Women and a Child, 1940. Chalk and Watercolour. 7 x 10 inches
(*Valentine Dobrée Collection.*)

